



As earlier this year, the Historical Society again cooperates with the Santa Cruz Island Foundation to offer to our membership an expanded double issue of NOTICIAS. This Northern Channel Islands Anthology focuses on the histories of Anacapa, Santa Rosa and San Miguel islands. We hope you enjoy reading about this special part of California's past.

Michael Redmon, NOTICIAS Editor

The Santa Barbara Historical Society  
136 E. De la Guerra Street, Santa Barbara, California 93101

# NORTHERN CHANNEL ISLANDS ANTHOLOGY

THE SANTA CRUZ ISLAND FOUNDATION  
Santa Barbara, California



*NORTHERN  
CHANNEL ISLANDS  
ANTHOLOGY*

Edited by Marla Daily

in collaboration with  
the Ventura County Museum of History & Art  
and the Santa Barbara Historical Society

OCCASIONAL PAPER NUMBER 2

1989

SANTA CRUZ ISLAND FOUNDATION  
Santa Barbara, California



*NORTHERN CHANNEL ISLANDS*  
ANTHOLOGY

Anthology copyright © 1989 by the Santa Cruz Island Foundation. All rights reserved.

The Santa Cruz Island Foundation gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of the Ventura County Museum of History & Art and the Santa Barbara Historical Society for granting permission to reproduce the articles and photographs which have appeared in their respective publications.

Cover and book design by Marla Daily and Nancy Donnelly, Santa Cruz Island Foundation.

Printed by Bellerophon Books, Santa Barbara, California

ISBN: 0-88388-157-8

First Edition

To

**Al Vail and Russ Vail**

who have nurtured a third generation ranching legacy on Santa Rosa Island that began in 1901 with their grandfather, Walter L. Vail

and to

**Bill Ehorn**

Channel Islands National Park Superintendant,  
(1974 - 1989)

who made the 1986 Santa Rosa Island transition to the National Park system a gracious one.



*NORTHERN CHANNEL ISLANDS*  
ANTHOLOGY

Anthology copyright © 1989 by the Santa Cruz Island Foundation. All rights reserved.

The Santa Cruz Island Foundation gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of the Ventura County Museum of History & Art and the Santa Barbara Historical Society for granting permission to reproduce the articles and photographs which have appeared in their respective publications.

Cover and book design by Marla Daily and Nancy Donnelly, Santa Cruz Island Foundation.

Printed by Bellerophon Books, Santa Barbara, California

ISBN: 0-88388-157-8

First Edition

To

**Al Vail and Russ Vail**

who have nurtured a third generation ranching legacy on Santa Rosa Island that began in 1901 with their grandfather, Walter L. Vail

and to

**Bill Ehorn**

Channel Islands National Park Superintendant,  
(1974 - 1989)

who made the 1986 Santa Rosa Island transition to the National Park system a gracious one.





## Table of Contents

Preface .....	vii
Acknowledgments .....	viii
Introduction .....	1
1. Channel Islands Nomenclature by Walker A. Tompkins (1958) .....	5
Anacapa Island .....	12
2. Wrecked on Anacapa by Charles P. Holden, a Survivor (1883) .....	15
3. The Winfield Scott Told to John C. Wray by a Survivor (1895) .....	21
4. Anacapa Island by Edward S. Spaulding (1959) .....	27
5. The Websters on Anacapa by Karen Jones Dowty (1978) .....	29
6. Frenchie by Karen Jones Dowty (1978) .....	35
7. The Anacapa Lighthouse by Karen Jones Dowty (1978) .....	39
8. Island Packers by Kirk L. Connally (1989) .....	43



<b>Santa Cruz Island</b> .....	52
9. Santa Cruz Island: Spanish Period to the Present by Carey Stanton and Marla Daily (1987).....	55
<b>Santa Rosa Island</b> .....	70
10. An Islandian on the Island by Austin T. Wright (1930).....	73
11. Santa Rosa Island by Dr. Perry G. M. Austin (1959).....	93
12. Santa Rosa Island: Past Present and Future by Al Vail and Marla Daily (1987).....	97
<b>San Miguel Island</b> .....	106
13. Random Notes on the Natural History of San Miguel Island by Clifton F. Smith (1977).....	109
14. The Waters Family of San Miguel by Stella Haverland Rouse (1977).....	113
15. The Wreck of the Cuba by Horace A. Sexton (1959).....	131
16. San Miguel Island "Crookery" by Whitney T. Genns (1977).....	137
17. The Cabrillo Monument on San Miguel Island by Isaac Antonio Bonilla (1959).....	141
18. Sheep Ranching on San Miguel Island by Lois Roberts (1987).....	147

## Introduction

There are eight islands located off the coast of southern California which comprise California's Channel Islands. These are divided into two separate groups: the Northern Channel Islands (San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, and Anacapa Islands), and the Southern Channel Islands (Santa Catalina, Santa Barbara, San Nicolas and San Clemente Islands). The four Northern Channel Islands, plus Santa Barbara Island, fall within the boundaries of Channel Islands National Park.

The Northern Channel Islands visually represent a seaward extension of the Santa Monica mountain range. Current scientific evidence suggests that these islands probably have not been connected to the mainland by a landbridge at least since the Pleistocene Ice Age which began about one and a half million years ago. It is known, however, that about 18,000 years ago these northern islands were connected to each other as one large island which scientists call *Santarosae*. With various rises in sea level, *Santarosae* eventually became the four separate islands as we see them today.

The first life forms arrived on *Santarosae* by various means, including air flotation, flight, sea water flotation, swimming, and accidental rafting. Through time and in isolation, many of the plants and animals now living on the Northern Channel Islands have evolved into endemic species, subspecies or varieties.

## Man on the Northern Channel Islands

Human occupation of the Northern Channel Islands has gone through four major phases: the prehistoric (Indian) era, the Spanish era, the Mexican era, and today's American era.

It is not known when the prehistoric human occupation of the Northern Channel Islands began. Radiocarbon dates



suggest that prehistoric man inhabited the Northern Channel Islands as long ago as 10,700 years (San Miguel Island). It has also been suggested that man may have occupied *Santarosae* as long ago as 30,000 years.

The Spanish era on the Northern Channel Islands began in 1542 with the voyage of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo. Reports from the expedition, recorded many years later, contain the first written mention of these islands, collectively called *Islas San Lucas*. This marked the beginning of recorded contact with island Indians. For the remainder of the 16th and all of the 17th century, less than a handful of expeditions are known to have left a record of visits to the Northern Channel Islands. It was not until 1769 that the sea going portion of Portolá's expedition was to claim the islands for the King of Spain under the Law of Indies. Twenty four years later (1793) the islands' names as we know them today were finalized by the English explorer Vancouver. The Indians who had occupied the islands throughout the Spanish era greatly decreased in number until the early 19th century when the last of them were removed to the mainland for "missionization." Sea otter hunting around the islands began in the late 1700s and continued into the mid-1800s. Russians, Aleuts, Spanish, English, French and Portuguese all participated in the trade until the animals were hunted to extinction on the islands.

The Mexican era began in 1821 with Mexico's successful revolt against Spain, and ended with the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo when California passed to the United States. During the Mexican era, the two northern islands of Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa were granted by the Governor of Mexico to private individuals. Anacapa and San Miguel Islands were left ungranted to pass to the new American government. In 1850 California became a state, and thus began the American era which continues today.

Marla Daily  
September 14, 1989

## CHANNEL ISLANDS NOMENCLATURE

By Walter A. Tompkins



Aerial view of Santa Cruz Island's west end looking east.

(Photograph by William B. Dewey)





The four Northern Channel Islands: Anacapa (three islets in foreground), Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel.  
(Photograph by William B. Dewey)

## CHANNEL ISLANDS NOMENCLATURE

By Walker A. Tompkins

*The following article by the late Walker A. Tompkins was published in Santa Barbara Historical Society's Noticias, Vol. IV, No. 3, October, 1958.*

Walker A. Tompkins (1909-1988) moved to Santa Barbara in 1948 where he wrote Western fiction for magazines, books, radio and television. In 1958, the year this article was published, he changed his writings to focus on Santa Barbara County's history.

Santa Barbara County's "maritime possessions", the Channel Islands, are currently in the news as a result of efforts by a southland group to persuade Congress to rename them in honor of their "forgotten" discoverer, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.

Since the name was established in 1792, the proposal to change it is being vigorously opposed by Santa Barbarans, including the private owners of property on the islands, and the directors of your Historical Society. The project had its genesis in a recently published book "The California Islands," by Charles Hillinger of the Los Angeles Times.

Mr. Hillinger's hankering to rename the Channel Islands is neither new nor original; it has been a popular sport for over four hundred years. The islands have probably been tagged with more labels than any other geographical feature on the coast, so that the practice of renaming them could almost be given the status of one of our old California customs.

No less than nine major groups have taken turns at christening the islands: the Indians; Cabrillo, in 1542; Vizcaíno, in 1602; Costansó, in 1770; Pérez, in 1774; Vancouver, in 1792-94; Wilkes, in 1841; the U.S. Coast Survey, of 1850; and a host of later-day place namers, who



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

finally consolidated their efforts, in 1938, when F.D.R. officially proclaimed the establishment of a "Channel Islands National Monument."

This Monument included the two westernmost of the Anacapa group, and Santa Barbara Island to the south; but it excluded San Nicolas Island, of "Lost Woman" fame, the tourist resort of Santa Catalina, and the southernmost island, San Clemente. Thus it becomes obvious that the key word in naming the islands is the *Channel* which they create by their off-shore location.

The islands today are virtually inaccessible to the average tourist. In the case of San Miguel, the island is restricted to guided missile personnel of the U. S. Navy. Nevertheless, the Channel Islands are of great importance to Santa Barbara. Paralleling the shore line, they form a vast breakwater which shields the county's South Coast from ocean storms, thereby playing a key role in our far-famed climate. The islands have long been of major interest to scientists in the specialized fields of archaeology, ethnology, paleontology, anthropology and geology.

Today the Channel Islands are named, from east to west as follows: the Anacapa Group; Santa Cruz (the largest); Santa Rosa; and San Miguel. Collectively and individually, however, they have been officially known by a host of other names, which this article will attempt to summarize. Historians for centuries have consulted contemporary maps of California and, where the off-shore islands were concerned, "paid their money and took their choice."

The Channel Islands, as any school child knows, were discovered by Juan Rodríguez. Little is known of this man except that he was a Portuguese mariner, better known by his nickname of Cabrillo, which translates "little goat." He set sail from the port of Navidad, Mexico, on the 27th of June, 1542, with two ships, the *San Salvador* and *La Victoria*, for the purpose of exploring the west coast of New Spain.

California was sighted July 2; but it was not until the 15th of October that Cabrillo reached the sheltered waters of the Santa Barbara channel and his unidentified diarist noted this in *Relation of the Voyage of Cabrillo*<sup>1</sup>:

### *Channel Islands Nomenclature*

"This day they passed along the shore of a large island, which must be 15 leagues long. They said it was very densely populated with the following pueblos: Niquipos, Maxul, Xugua, Nitel, Nacamo, and Nimitapal."

Cabrillo named this "large island" San Lucas. A few days later, discovering that it was actually three separate islands, he renamed them "Las Islas de San Lucas". The native Indian names had been Ciquimuymu (San Miguel), Nicálque (Santa Rosa) and Limu (Santa Cruz).

On October 25 Cabrillo anchored in a sheltered bay on San Miguel Island. It was here that he suffered a fall which broke his arm and caused gangrene which eventually took his life. They took possession of the island in the name of the Crown and christened it La Posesión in honor of the occasion.

During the stormy month of November, Cabrillo continued up the California coast, reaching as far north as 38° 31' in the vicinity of Fort Ross, but failing to note the Golden Gate or Monterey Bay, the most important landmarks. Returning south, heavy weather off Point Concepción drove Cabrillo to the shelter of La Posesión (San Miguel) once more.

His diarist reports:

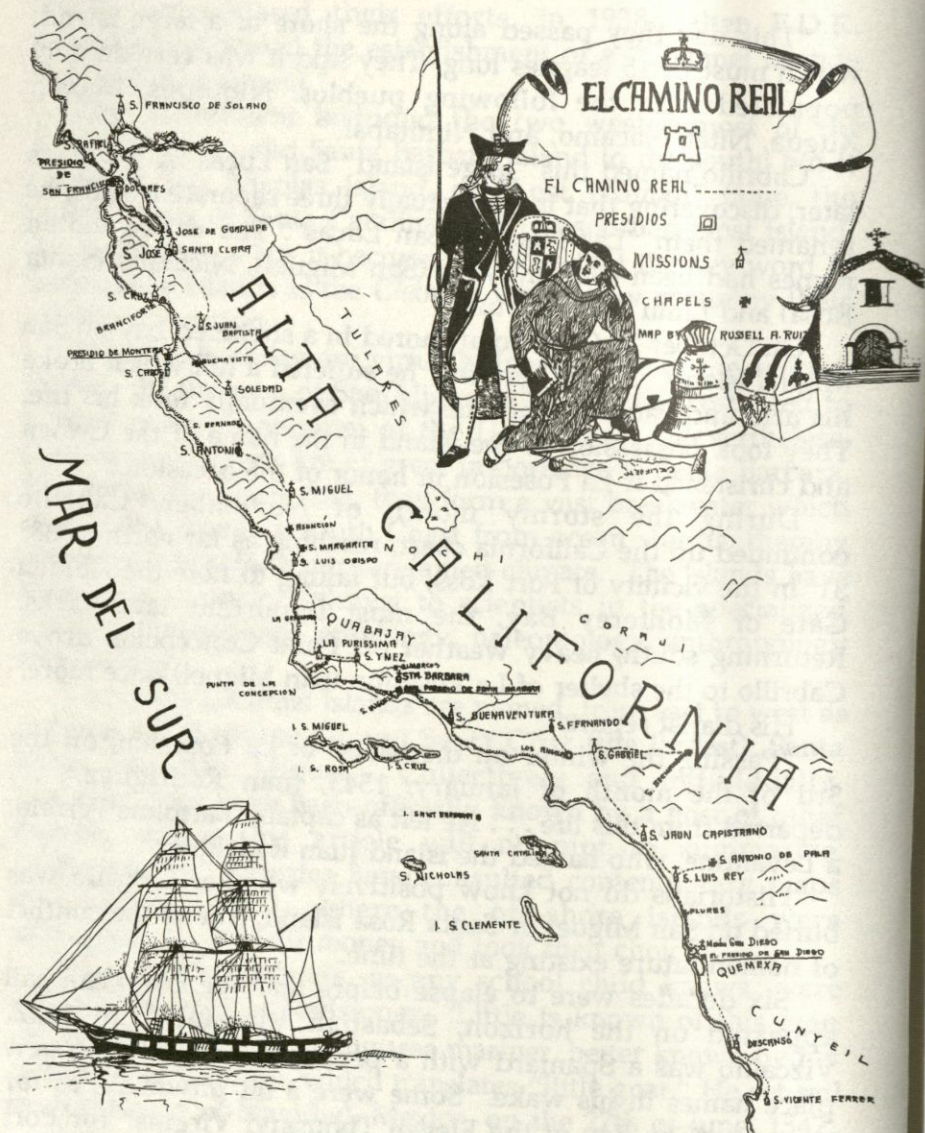
"Passing the winter on the island of La Posesión, on the 3rd of the month of January, 1543, Juan Rodríguez . . . departed from this life . . . He left as captain, Bartolme Ferrelo, a Levantine, who named the island Juan Rodríguez . . ."

Historians do not know positively whether Cabrillo was buried on San Miguel or Santa Rosa Island, due to the conflict of nomenclature existing at the time.

Six decades were to elapse before another European sail appeared on the horizon, Sebastián Vizcaíno's, in 1602. Vizcaíno was a Spaniard with a penchant for scattering new place names in his wake. Some were a bit unwieldy; as for example "The Bay of the Eleven Thousand Virgins" for Port San Quentín, Baja California. He won local immortality, at any rate, when he bestowed the name "Santa Barbara" on the Channel to honor the martyred Roman virgin whose feast day was December 4, a day which found him anchored off our coast. He describes his arrival in the Santa Barbara channel in his *Diary*<sup>2</sup> as follows:



# Santa Cruz Island Foundation



Map by Russell Ruiz.

(Santa Barbara Historical Society collection)

## Channel Islands Nomenclature

"... we went on skirting the coast, and on Monday the second of said month we sighted two other large islands. Passing between the first and the mainland a canoe came out to us with two Indian fishermen ... rowing so swiftly that they seemed to fly. They came alongside without saying a word to us, and went twice around us with so great speed that it seemed impossible; this finished, they came aft, bowing their heads in way of courtesy ..."

Vizcaino also gave the name Santa Barbara to the easternmost of the Anacapa Islands, although the name was later transferred (permanently) to the island lying to the southeast of the Channel group, far enough to fall inside the orbit of that most elastic and predatory of all geographical boundaries, the Los Angeles county line.

(The name "Canal de St. Bárbara" also appeared on Briggs type maps as early as 1625).

Vizcaino kept on juggling place names at will. Santa Rosa, which had been Nicalque to the Indians and San Lucas to Cabrillo, was set down as "San Ambrosio" on Vizcaino's charts. He also showed Santa Barbara and San Nicolás Islands, but makes no reference to them in his diary.

To San Miguel went the name "Isla de Baxos", which Juan Pérez, in 1774, also applied to that island. On a 1794 map we find "Santa Rosa" in the middle of the three Channel Islands, and George Vancouver fixed this nomenclature in 1793.

Next in line, working down the coast, is Santa Cruz Island. The Indians referred to it as Limu or Limun; Ferrello in 1543 inked the name "San Sebastián" on his map of the island. Vizcaino, in his turn, called it "Isla de Gente Barbud" because he had heard rumors that bearded men—possibly mariners from Europe or the Orient who had been marooned there by shipwreck—had been seen by the Indians.

The name Santa Cruz first appeared in April 1774, when a shore party from the *San Antonio*, Juan Pérez's ship, landed on its shores. A Friar lost a staff with a cross on it, which an Indian found and returned the next day. However, it is not clear from Pérez's maps and reports whether this incident occurred on what we now call Santa Cruz Island.



### Santa Cruz Island Foundation

The easternmost islands in the Channel group were by far the most troublesome, not only to lookouts posted in the crow's nest atop a galleon's foremast, but to place-namers. The Anacapas, as we know them today, are actually a string of disconnected rocks large enough to be called islands.

Gaspar de Portolá, in 1770, mistook the westernmost island for the sail of a ship on the horizon. When he learned his mistake, he named the island Falsa Vela, false sail, and the adjoining islands Las Mesitas, or small tablelands. Four years later Juan Pérez came along and renamed them "Isoletas de Santo Tomás", a name which frequently appeared on European maps of the period.

The only changeless thing where the Anacapas are concerned is the "monarch" who reigned there. His name was Confusion. For example, Costansó reports that "Anajup" was the native name for modern Santa Cruz Island, and that this name was transferred to the neighboring Anacapas.

Vancouver, in the last decade of the 1700s, called all three islands "Eneapah", but spelled it "Enecapa" on his maps later on. Gibbs has Encapa, while the U. S. Coast Survey in 1852 set it down on their official charts as Anacapa. Two years later the name "Anacapa" first appeared on published maps. It is believed that the name was derived from a Chumash Indian word, the meaning of which died when that culture became extinct.

In 1841 the U.S. exploring expedition led by the Navy's Charles Wilkes, the first American exploration of the interior of California, gave the three largest islands of the Channel group the names they now bear, verifying an alignment which had been established by Vancouver some fifty years previously.

The Coast Survey named the group the "Santa Barbara Islands" but local usage—the final arbiter in most hassles of this type—led to the official adoption of the name "Channel Islands" in 1938. Whether this name will become a political football and be changed, with the resulting confusion and cost of revising maps all over the world, remains to be seen.

In reviewing the roster of the Saints whose names have at various times been allotted to Santa Barbara County's

### Channel Islands Nomenclature

off-shore territory, hindsight tells us that a lot of trouble could have been saved 416 years ago if Cabrillo had named them "Las Islas de Todos Santos" and been done with it!<sup>3</sup>

#### Footnotes

1. The "Relation of the Voyage of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo 1542-1543" was first published in Spanish in 1857 by Buckingham Smith in his *Coleccion de Varios Documentos para la Historia de la Florida y Tierras Adyacentes* from an unsigned contemporary manuscript in the Archivo General de Indias at Seville. The writer's identity is not established, some historians believing him to be Ferrelo, others Juan Paez, who seems to have the weight of evidence on his side.

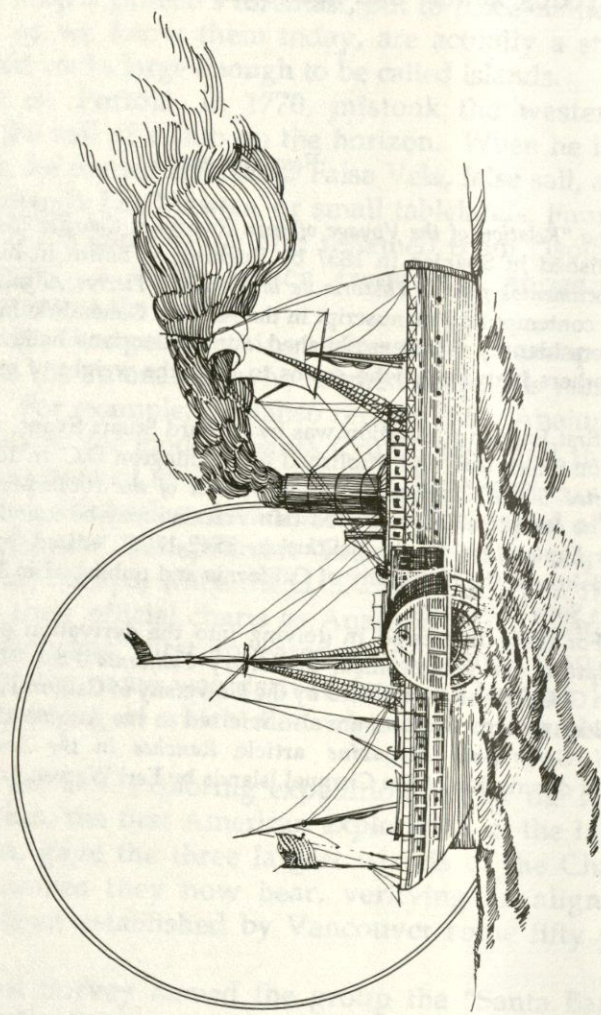
The first English translation was by Richard Stuart Evans, made from the Buckingham Smith text, and published in Washington D.C. in 1879 as a *Report upon United States Geographical Surveys West of the 100th Meridian*.

2. The complete Diary of Sebastián Vizcaíno may be found in the volume "Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706" edited by Dr. Herbert Eugene Bolton of the University of California and published in 1916 by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

3. For those interested in delving into the derivation of geographical nomenclature, the geographical dictionary *California Place Names* compiled by Erwin G. Gudde and published by the University of California Press in 1949 is an excellent source. Readers are also referred to the August 1958 issue of the *National Geographic Magazine* article *Ranches in the Sea*, a profusely illustrated description of the Channel Islands by Earl Warren, Jr.



## Santa Cruz Island Foundation



STEAMER GEN. WINFIELD SCOTT

## Anacapa Island

Anacapa Island is the smallest of the four Northern Channel Islands. It is almost five miles long, but only 1/4 to 1/2 mile wide. It is actually composed of three islets, East, Middle and West, bounded on most sides by sheer cliffs and connected only occasionally at extremely low tides. Together, the three islets are 1.1 square miles in size, and contain approximately 700 acres. It is eleven miles from the mainland, and lies in Ventura County. Summit Peak on West Anacapa, at 930 feet in elevation, is the highest point. Middle Anacapa reaches 320 feet, and East Anacapa is 250 feet.

The name Anacapa is thought to be derived from the Chumash Indian word *Eneepah* meaning ever-changing or deception. Depending on the weather and the angle of approach to Anacapa, the three islets often appear as one large mesa or tableland.

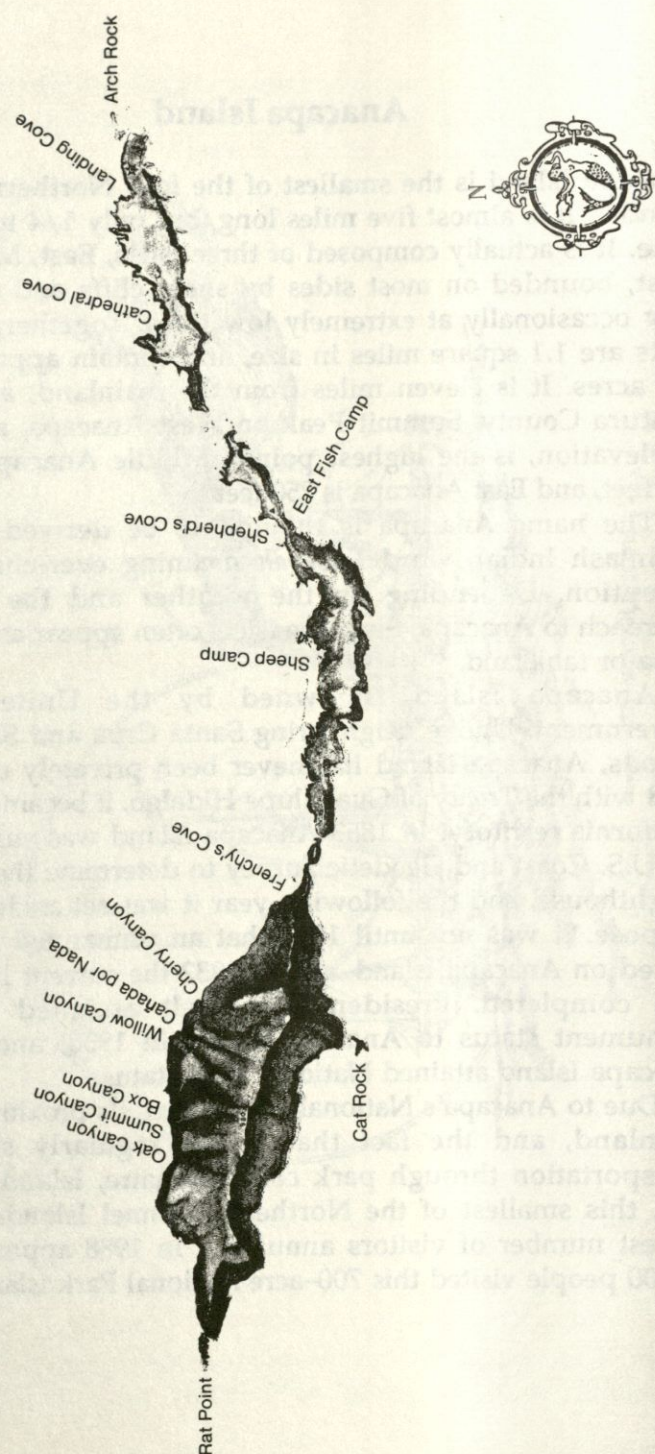
Anacapa Island is owned by the United States Government. Unlike neighboring Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands, Anacapa Island has never been privately owned. In 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, it became a part of California territory. In 1853 Anacapa Island was surveyed by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey to determine the need for a lighthouse, and the following year it was set aside for such purpose. It was not until 1911 that an unmanned light was placed on Anacapa Island, and in 1932 the current lighthouse was completed. President Roosevelt assigned National Monument status to Anacapa Island in 1938, and in 1980 Anacapa Island attained National Park status.

Due to Anacapa's National Park status, its proximity to the mainland, and the fact that it has regularly scheduled transportation through park concessionaire, Island Packers, Inc., this smallest of the Northern Channel Islands has the largest number of visitors annually. In 1988 approximately 25,000 people visited this 700-acre National Park island.

-editor



# Santa Cruz Island Foundation



ANACAPA ISLAND

## WRECKED ON ANACAPA By Charles P. Holden

The following account of the wreck of the S.S. Winfield Scott first appeared on August 4, 1883 in the Signal. It was reprinted in Ventura County Historical Society's Quarterly, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Spring, 1978.

S.S. Winfield Scott (1851-1853), owned by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, was built in 1851 to carry mail and passengers along the Pacific Coast of North America. She was a side paddle wheel steamer, 225 feet in length. On December 2, 1853, while attempting to set a new speed record from San Francisco to Panama, she rammed into Anacapa Island in a dense midnight fog. Today her wreck site is on the National Register of Historic Places. Various relics can be found in Santa Barbara Historical Society's Trussell Winchester Adobe.

The story of the wreck of the Panama Steamship Winfield Scott in sight of Santa Barbara, nearly 30 years ago, has just been given to the public by a survivor of the wreck, Charles P. Holden, who writes to the Chicago Times. The Winfield Scott with 200 passengers for Panama went on the rocks of Anacapa Island. Captain Blunt, who commanded the steamer, had decided that the Santa Barbara Channel was the shortest cut to Panama. From Mr. Holden's story the following condensation is made:

Our steamer took the inside track, or the Santa Barbara Channel; and the night of December 1 and the day of December 2 passed pleasantly. Early in the day we could with field glasses see the steamships of other lines or companies at a great distance to the west of us; they too were making for Panama but had taken the



*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

old, safe outside track. As it appeared we certainly would beat them into Panama by from 12 to 20 hours, which was worth saving to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. On the night of December 2, soon after supper, a dense fog set in. We are then off Santa Barbara, steaming along finely; but the fog came, and such a fog too. The passengers, however, gave no heed to it, not dreaming of danger; and the ship glided swiftly along over the smooth sea. The hours passed pleasantly; and by 10 o'clock, or perhaps a little longer, most of the passengers had retired to their staterooms for the night, unconscious of the danger that was soon to overtake them. At about the time the passengers retired there was a great commotion among the officers of the ship, and orders were quickly given to the man at the helm; and I presume the course of the steamer was somewhat changed, as it was quickly rumored that we had barely escaped a point of rocks making out from the Island of Santa Cruz. The officers again settled down quite at ease though it could be seen they were vigilant and at their post of duty. The steamer sped on through a fog so dense it would seem that one could cut it with a knife, so thick and heavy did it appear, when about 11 o'clock all hands were aroused as if by magic for the ship when under full headway had run upon the rocks. Instantly as it would seem the deck was covered with the passengers, every stateroom being at once emptied of its inmates seeking for safety upon the ship's deck. All knew as if by instinct that some terrible calamity had befallen the steamer. Men, women and children were there in one common mass. The clear voice of the captain could be distinctly heard as he gave his orders pertaining to the saving of the lives of those on board, and also as to the handling of the ship then foundering on the rocks. As if by intuition the captain found that she had struck the lower edge of a slanting ledge of rocks; and he gave immediate orders to the engineer to force her on this ledge as far as possible and then, remembering the fate

*Wrecked on Anacapa*

of the passenger steamer *Independence*, ordered the fires under the boilers at once put out that the rush of water into the engine room and suddenly upon the fires might not precipitate a fire and thus burn up what was left of the sinking ship, as was the case a short time before. Life preservers were fastened around each passenger, and all on board were preparing for the worst.

The dashing of the waves against the rocks, and the sure sinking of the steamer or going to pieces in that dense fog, was well calculated to alarm the strongest heart. Some were praying and others imploring to be saved from a watery grave which at that time bid fair to engulf us all. It was a fearful time, a time of terrible suspense.

The cool-headed were actively at work getting ready for the tussle with the water when driven to it, by arranging different kinds of material (like cabin door, chairs, and other material) for rafts and floats. One genial gentleman who had his wife and family on board was nearly distracted. He ran up and down the deck like one beside himself while his wife was as cool as the coolest, counseling all those near her to be calm and to be sure and obey the orders of the captain of the boat. I think his name was Diamond, a merchant of New York City. The captain knew that some unknown current had taken the steamer out of its course; but where he then was, he could not tell for you could not see half the ship's length, so dense was the fog. A boat had been dispatched to feel around among the rocks and to find a place to land the passengers, provided the vessel did not go to pieces in the meantime. It returned and reported favorably, then the debarkation commenced. The boats which had been filled with women, children and the sick were first taken to the spot of rescue, then the passengers in general; and it was but a very short time before all were landed on the rocks where they climbed far above the water's edge, thankful beyond measure that they had thus escaped a



*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

watery grave. Judge of the surprise of the captain and crew of this beautiful steamer, when the fog cleared away, to find the bow of the ship within two hundred feet of a ledge of rock several hundred feet in height upon which the steamer was rushing when she struck the ledge that saved her and all on board from instant destruction. When daylight came, the passengers found themselves all huddled together on a mere ledge, surrounded by water, while a short distance away was the main island of which this spur was a part.

The captain found that they were on a reef a few hundred feet from Anacapa Island which was in plain view of the Pueblo of Santa Barbara. The passengers were transferred with what provisions were obtainable to the main island where the crowd huddled together the best they could.

The vessel was a complete wreck. The captain at once dispatched a boat for the main shore with dispatches to San Francisco to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, informing them of our fate and calling for immediate assistance; but the distance being more than 400 miles, it took time to reach San Francisco as there were neither railroads nor telegraph from lower California to the metropolis. When these steps had been taken, we settled down to abide our time. We felt happy that we had been saved from the wreck; and now the question was, how could we get away from our miserable little island?

Our first meal on the island was doled out to us about 10 a.m., December 3, 1853. It consisted of such food as they had been enabled to save, and it was good enough; the only question was whether it would hold out until help would reach us. After this we scattered among the rocks, all scanning the ocean for help. At about 3 p.m. of that day, December 3, one of the regular mail steamers was seen in the distance *en route* for San Francisco. The signal of distress attracted her attention, when a captain with a boat came to us, not

*Wrecked on Anacapa*

daring to come nearer than a couple of miles with the steamer. It was the steamship *California*, a Captain Leroy was her commander. She was heavily loaded with passengers for San Francisco, but took some of the passengers from our island home back to San Francisco; and among the number Mr. Diamond and his family. Then we awaited results.

The shipwrecked crowd on Anacapa waited anxiously for relief from San Francisco. It was the eighth day after the departure of the *California* before assistance arrived. In the meantime the provisions and water had been exhausted, and the situation was desperate. On the morning of the eighth day (December 10, 1853) the report of a cannon was heard on the island. Instantaneously as it seemed, the crowd hurrahed, screamed and yelled for joy. Assistance was close at hand, so we all thought. As it was quite dark, large piles of seagrass were lighted, and the gun which had been taken from the wreck made answer in tones of thunder. The little island seemed alive at that moment, then came a lull for 10 minutes and the time seemed an hour, when all began to think the report was from the shore which was nearly 20 miles away. Suddenly there came another report, and then another. The gun on the island was making answer, and the little party shouted as none but those in dire distress could shout. The firing of the cannon from the island and the shouting continued with casual reports from the ship of succor until in the early mist of the morning the little steamer came in full view, feeling her way towards us, and when within about a mile and a half her boats were manned and dispatched to our rescue.

The nearly starving passengers and crew, nearly 300 in all, were taken off the island and taken to Panama where they raised a subscription for the purpose of presenting a silver service to Captain Leroy who had saved them from death by starvation. Such is the story of a wreck in the Santa Barbara

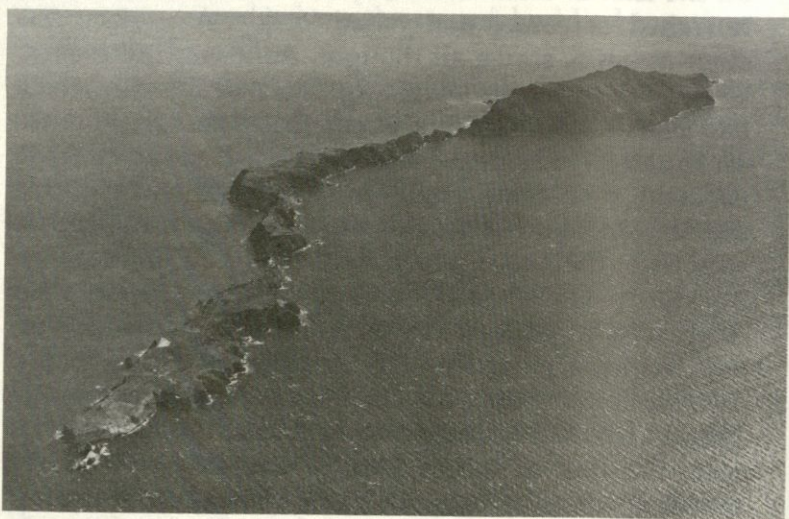


### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

Channel 30 years ago, and long before newspapers had been presented in this city or county.

It is not generally known that the eagle which ornamented the front of Lobero's Theatre, Santa Barbara is a relic of the wrecked Panama steamer *Winfield Scott* which struck upon the rocks on Anacapa Island thirty years ago. It was the only piece of the steamer which was saved.

—Signal, August 4, 1883



Anacapa Island

(Photograph by William B. Dewey)

### **THE WINFIELD SCOTT** Told to John C. Wray by a Survivor

*The following article was first published on January 17, 1896 in the Free Press. It was reprinted in Ventura County Historical Society's Quarterly, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Spring 1978.*

December 2, 1853 the Pacific Mail steamship *Winfield Scott*, Captain Le Roy commanding, left San Francisco bound for Panama with 450 steerage and 375 cabin passengers, the U.S. mail, something like \$2,000,000 in bullion and a miscellaneous cargo. Everything went smoothly until between 2 and 3 o'clock on the morning of the 4th, when the ship went ashore on Anacapa Island in the Santa Barbara Channel and sank in about five hours. So much is of record in the archives of the P.M.S.S. Co., and the meager news reports of later date in the San Francisco papers of January 1853. No lives were lost and the treasure, mail and baggage were saved.

Newspaper enterprise had not developed in 1853 to the extent that it since has; and no special correspondents were sent out in chartered tugs to visit and write up the wreck; the only published accounts were dated some three weeks after it occurred, and came in fragments of stories through three and four hands. The officers of the vessel were ordered to maintain silence on the matter; and as the passengers were taken East, nothing like an accurate account of the chief incidents of the wreck of the famous liner has ever been published.

After a lapse of 42 years the accident of chance renders it possible for the *Free Press* to furnish its readers the only true account ever published in California of the scenes and incidents of the disaster. This story will prove of more than ordinary interest to residents of southern California as



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

Anacapa Island is one of the historical group at our very door. Yachting parties from Ventura and Santa Barbara seldom return from water excursions without bringing to the mainland relics of the old steamer whose bones are bleaching on the rocks at this writing.

Saturday, December 21, 1895 F. S. Crane of Sycamore, Illinois was introduced to John C. Wray, a representative of the *Free Press*, and told in substance the following story:

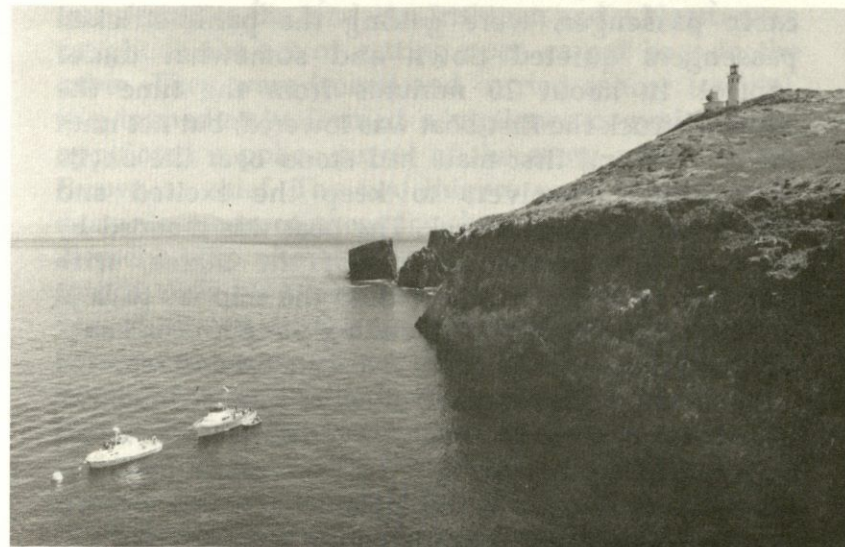
April 14, 1853 in company with William Storp and Willis Wright, now a resident of Stockton, California, I left Aurora, Illinois with 150 head of beef cattle which we intended to drive to the gold mines in California for market. After a drive across the plains lasting six months, we reached Hangtown October 30th with 110 head, having lost 40 head on the road. After disposing of my share in the venture I decided to return home by steamer, not caring to undergo the hardships of a back trip overland. My partners decided to remain in the gold fields; and I left them behind and made my way to San Francisco, and took passage of New York on the *Winfield Scott* December 2nd. The cabin was full and I took a berth in the steerage with about 350 to 400 others, principally miners returning East, nearly all of whom had specie belts well-filled. There were a good many hard characters among them and life for the first 24 hours was anything but pleasant.

Everything went along all right until the afternoon of the 3rd when a heavy fog set in, so heavy that you could almost cut it with a knife. By 11 o'clock that night everything was quiet and all lights out in the steerage as nearly everybody was tired out and sleeping. As nearly as I can fix the time, between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning (the 4th) I felt a shock coupled with a grinding, crushing kind of noise which woke me out of a sound sleep; and feeling that some accident had happened, I jumped out of my bunk and ran for the deck, being one of the first, if not the first, of the steerage passengers to reach there. I found

### *The Winfield Scott*



The wreck of the *Winfield Scott* lies offshore on the north side of Middle Anacapa Island. The site is on the National Register of Historic Places.  
(Photograph by William B. Dewey)



Channel Islands National Park concessionaire, Island Packers, provides transportation to the Northern Channel Islands. East Anacapa Island and its lighthouse is pictured here.  
(Photograph by William B. Dewey)



*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

everything in confusion, and realized at once from the talk of the officers that we had gone ashore. The bow of the steamer was well up on a bank of some kind which could be seen indistinctly through the fog. I went back to my berth, and had hard work in getting my shoes and coat which I had left behind when I made the first rush for the deck. The passengers had by this time become panic stricken, and were crowding over each other in their anxiety to reach the deck. The wildest kind of rumors ran through the ship, some declaring that the boilers had burst, others that we were sinking fast; but everyone was for himself, with no thought of anything but saving his life and his dust if he had any. When I reached the deck the second time (probably three to five minutes had elapsed from the time I felt the first shock) I found that the steamer was fast on the rocks and that she was settling gradually by the stern. The wildest kind of confusion prevailed; but Captain Le Roy and his officers assisted by Captain Brown, a cabin passenger, were getting the panic-stricken passengers quieted down and somewhat under control. In about 20 minutes from the time the steamer struck the first boat was lowered; but not until the captain and first mate had stood over the davits with drawn revolvers to keep the excited and frightened passengers back. The boat was manned by four of the crew and one of the mates, with instructions to find out how close the ship lay to land and discover, if possible, a landing place for the boats. The boat came back in about five minutes and reported a safe landing close at hand, on what appeared to be an island. From remarks which I overheard afterwards I believe the captain thought he was ashore on Santa Cruz Island. As soon as the captain was satisfied that a landing was possible, he ordered the boats lowered and the passengers transferred to the shore. By this time the panic had subsided as the vessel remained fast on the rocks as though in a cradle, and the transfer was made rapidly and safely. The women, children and

*The Winfield Scott*

sick persons, of which there were quite a number, being first looked after. By daylight everybody was safe on shore, or what appeared to be the shore, but which in reality was a rock lying close to the main island.

With daylight the fog lifted and for the first time the officers knew where they were. A second transfer from the rock to the island was made and we went into camp for the eight days and a half which we were obliged to pass on the island. The first day a boat with four men was dispatched to the mainland with instructions to make their way overland to the nearest point from which word could be wired to San Francisco. We saw them start for the mainland but never learned of their arrival. The captain and crew worked hard and got on shore nearly all of the mail matter, bullion and baggage, over which a guard was placed, as the rowdy element among the passengers began to manifest itself as soon as the first panic subsided and before the passengers had been transferred to the land. An Irishman and a Negro were caught in the act of cutting open carpet bags in the cabin. They were ironed and carried ashore for trial. We immediately formed a vigilance committee and appointed a police patrol of the camp with Captain Brown as chief. The two thieves were tried; and an example made of them for the benefit of the rowdy element who showed a decided disposition to run things their own way. The two men were stripped, spread-eagled on the sand and whipped by Captain Brown in person. Every time he brought the rope down, he brought blood. It was a fearful spectacle but it had the desired effect, and no more rowdyism or thieving occurred. Our provisions were scanty; during the last two days we were forced to issue short rations, but everything considered we got along fairly well.

The third day we sighted the Pacific Mail steamer *Illinois* which sent a boat ashore, learned our condition and took one of our officers and a few passengers, and left for San Francisco to send us succor.



## Santa Cruz Island Foundation

The morning of the 13th she returned; and we were transferred with bullion, mail and baggage to Panama without further incident of importance, but more than thankful for our deliverance from what at one time seemed certain death. For myself I never wanted any more ocean travel in mine, and was glad when I set foot in New York City.

Mr. Crane has resided since 1854 in Sycamore, Illinois and made the trip to Ventura in the hope of being able to revisit Anacapa Island and go over the ground of his thrilling experiences of 42 years ago. Owing to the absence of H. B. Webster with his boat, Mr. Crane was obliged to go to Santa Barbara to find means of transportation to the island. He is a hale old gentleman of 64 and retains a vivid recollection of the main features of the wreck which have been briefly outlined above. The only survivor of whom he has personal knowledge is Luther Johnson of Sterling, Illinois, who with him was one of the police patrol on the island.

—Free Press, January 17, 1896

## ANACAPA ISLAND By Edward S. Spaulding

The following article by Edward S. Spaulding first appeared in Santa Barbara Historical Society's *Noticias* in Fall, 1959.

Edward S. Spaulding (1891-1981) came to Santa Barbara as a six year old boy in 1897. He developed a lifelong interest in the Channel Islands, and became one of Santa Barbara County's most avid naturalists.

From the top of La Cumbre Peak, on an exceptionally clear day in winter, at least six islands can be seen by the unaided eye in the channel to the south and the southeast. On a clear day, the landward four of these, known to us locally as the Channel Islands, can be made out with some degree of distinctness by the bathers along our waterfront. Of these four, the easternmost is Anacapa Island, a smallish hill with an extension to the east that consists of several blocks or rocks that are all but hidden to the bathers by the curvature of the earth's surface, but that are clearly seen from any slight elevation. From the considerable elevation of the front steps of the Old Mission, Anacapa Island has appeared to some eyes as an engine drawing a short train of cars; and so it often is referred to in these terms. The name "Anacapa" has been spelled in the past in several ways. It seems to be of Indian origin. Its significance has been lost with the passing of the years, according to some authorities, even though there are those who maintain that the name means "mirage."

Along with the other islands of the group—Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, and San Miguel—Anacapa Island is a continuation westward of the Santa Monica Mountains and is of volcanic origin. (The hard, igneous rocks that form our breakwater were obtained from quarries on Santa Cruz Island.) It does not possess permanent supplies of fresh water, and so it does not offer a favorable habitat to man or other



### Santa Cruz Island Foundation

land mammals. Its only denizens, other than the rats and hares that have been placed there through the agency of man, are birds and sea mammals—seal, sea lions, and an occasional sea elephant. Its chief interest for us lies in the fact that its easternmost rock probably was the "island" to which Viscaíno gave the name of "Santa Barbara" when, en route from Santa Catalina Island, he passed by it for the first time in 1503.\* From this small event in a voyage of considerable importance, not only our channel but our county, our city, and one of our streets eventually received their names.

When, in 1860, Santa Barbara County was divided into two, roughly equal parts at Rincon Creek, this line of division was carried out to sea through the channel between Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands. The former island became a part of the newly formed county of San Buenaventura, and the latter remained, as it had been for a decade, a part of Santa Barbara County. This status continues to this day. In the past, the ocean boundary line between the two counties has been of the smallest moment. Should large pools of oil be discovered below the Channel in this region, the exact location of this line may become a matter of considerable interest and of acrimonious dispute.

Anacapa, San Miguel, and Santa Barbara Islands are owned by the Federal Government. During the Second Phase of the World War, Anacapa Island was made a military reservation. Incidentally, Mexico continues to maintain its claim of sovereignty over all these islands on the ground that they are not specifically mentioned in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1846, when California and other territory was ceded to the United States.

Some of the best fishing grounds of this area lie to the southeast of the easternmost rock of Anacapa Island. A "light" is maintained by the United States Coast Guard on its easternmost hilltop.

\* 1602

-editor

### THE WEBSTERS ON ANACAPA

By Karen Jones Dowty

The following article first appeared in *Ventura County Historical Society's Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Spring 1978.

Heaman Bayfield Webster paid his first visit to Anacapa Island in 1884, at which time he reported a shack on West Anacapa Island occupied by a Chinese fisherman. From about 1890-1895 Webster hunted seals around Anacapa Island for their oil and pelts. By the end of the century the animals were no longer found in sufficient numbers to make the business profitable. According to Government records, Webster leased Anacapa Island from 1907-1917. In 1907 he purchased the 40-50 sheep already on the island from the island's previous lessee, and then added 250 additional sheep purchased from neighboring Santa Cruz Island.

Agriculture has played a major role in Ventura County history. Many colorful tales can be told of earlier ranching days, but one of the most unusual is that of Heaman Bayfield (H. Bay) Webster and his sheep ranch and fishing vacation camp on Anacapa Island.

The three small islets of Anacapa, barely a square mile in size, and much of that precipitous and inaccessible even for the sure-footed sheep, were not large enough for full-time ranching in the normal sense. Bay's father was postmaster<sup>1</sup> and he was assistant postmaster. But his first love was boating, and this long-time Venturan had the time and income to try new ventures. When the Howland lease on Anacapa expired in 1907, Bay contracted with the Department of the Interior to run sheep on Anacapa and have the fishing concession for the same island. The lease cost him \$75 per year.\*



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

That spring Bay and his wife Martha loaded household goods aboard his boat. With their two young sons, Morris and Harvey, they moved across the 14 miles of the Santa Barbara Channel to Anacapa Island. There they would spend their next 10 summers and two of the winters. This small island with its sheer cliffs, craggy precipices and volcanic tide pools would provide many an adventure for the Websters: an island ravaged by wind and water.

Where a few scraggly eucalyptus trees now grow on the shoreward side of Middle Anacapa, the Websters made their home. Using whatever materials were convenient and readily available, the family built five huts which they named Camps Felicity, Simplicity, Capacity, Intensity and Necessity. Camp Capacity was entirely of flotsam. Camp Intensity was created from tents. Camp Necessity was probably the world's only sand-flushing outhouse; a trapdoor on the windward side allowed wind-deposited sand to pour into the 'toilet'. Camp Felicity with its concrete floor and windows facing the channel and Camp Simplicity which had a galvanized iron roof and furnishings brought from the mainland were more permanent.

Water was a problem for his island family. Except for the slow seep in what is now called Indian Water Cave on the shoreward side of West Anacapa, there was no fresh water on the island. The previous lessee had constructed cisterns to collect rain water; but rats (about the only land mammal on the island) had invaded them, leaving the water fit only for laundering. Bay built a storage tank by Camp Felicity. On each trip to the mainland, he returned with five-gallon cans filled with fresh water.

The 800 sheep that Bay grazed on the island had an even more difficult time obtaining the water so necessary to their existence. During the wet winter and later the foggy months, they could lick moisture off the iceplant. This transport from Africa, along with the native *Dudleya* (a plant that looks similar to the iceplant), was also the main diet of the sheep. In the autumnal dry season, the animals were forced to eat the prickly pear cacti for their water. The spines from the cacti stuck in the lips and gums of the unfortunate animals. A turn

### *The Websters On Anacapa*



*Anacapa Landing Beach, 1895, later known as Frenchy's Cove.  
(Ventura County Museum of History & Art collection)*

of the century rumor had it that sheep on Anacapa were in fog so much that they became walking sponges and could suck all the water they wanted from one another's coats. Amusing as it is, the rumor was never verified.

The spring shearing was a busy time for the Websters. As on the neighboring islands where sheep were grazed, three or four Indian shearers would be brought from the mainland. Sheep were rounded up on each islet for the shearers, no easy task on these craggy islets. The wool was baled and loaded on Bay's boat for shipment to the mainland. At this time some sheep were loaded on the vessel also. Although he was primarily interested in wool, Bay had to carefully control the herd size; the island ranch was too small for overgrazing to continue for long.

Martha cooked for the shearers, family and friends on a wood-burning stove. This especially kept her busy during the two weeks at shearing time. Adept at working with the old stove, she produced cream puffs so delicious that Harvey



## Santa Cruz Island Foundation

would recall them with pleasure over a half century later. During bad weather when they could not be out playing in their boat or in the tidepools, both boys were taught to bake bread in this same wood stove.

The climate of Anacapa, as that of the rest of coastal southern California, is so mild that the sheep needed no shelter. Being rather self-sufficient animals, they made ranching a rather easy occupation. When the Websters spent their winters ashore, they left a single watchman on the island to protect the flock. Most years there were no problems; but one winter he kept reporting that poachers were trying to steal sheep. On Bay's questioning, the watchman explained that many nights when the wind had died down enough for him to hear, the barks of the poachers' dogs were quite clear from the other side of the island. It took Bay only a second to realize his flock was still safe and he had no problem for the noise was actually the raspy barks of sea lions which inhabit Anacapa's seaward side.

Bay Webster offered Ventura County residents one of the first package vacations known. For a small sum, a local farmer could take his family to Anacapa on one of Bay's boats<sup>2</sup> and stay as long as they wanted. Facilities were available free in the 'Camp' community as were fishing, swimming, Indian artifact collecting and hiking. There was a smokehouse for the use of lucky fishermen, and many returned home with an ample supply of smoked fish for the following year. In return for their host's generosity, many brought the Websters gifts such as honey, produce and dried beans.

Morris and Harvey were in a boys' paradise, a wonderland of adventure. Morris was old enough to accompany his father and work as a deck hand on the fishing boat. Harvey, only three the first summer, stayed with his mother and hunted for the then plentiful arrowheads left from the Chumash Indians; with a life jacket and a line fastened securely to him, he did his own commercial fishing. One year's dried abalone and edible seaweed sales to Chinese markets made Harvey \$80.

Days were busy with Bay and Morris making trips to the mainland or fishing while Martha took care of chores and

## The Websters On Anacapa

Harvey worked at his enterprises. Evenings were spent reading and listening to the omnipresent crashing of waves on Anacapa's shores. Visits from Grandpa Webster and his war stories were always a treat, and many an evening was passed listening to them.

When Bay renewed his lease in 1912, the Bureau of Lighthouses had taken over the use of East Anacapa. He was not awarded another the next time so the family returned to shore.\*\* Bay subsequently occupied himself with other projects, one of which was the Webster Transportation Company that provided a bus line in Ventura.

### Notes

1. Le Febre Webster

2. The *Corliss* was 45 feet long with a regular schooner canvas but never sailed; it was appropriately named for its three cylinder Corliss engine. The 35 foot *Anacapa* was a motor launch with a two cylinder gas engine. The 25 foot *Virginia* was run by steam. W. R. (Bob) Hill.

\*Government records indicate H. Bay Webster took over the Anacapa Island lease from Le Mesnager, the first official lessee (1902-1907).

\*\* In 1917 Webster tried to renew his lease for 25 years instead of the usual 5-year period outlined by the Government. He found an Act of Congress would be required to change the terms of the lease, and since World War I had begun, Congress had little time to devote to such small matters. Webster lost his bid to Ira Eaton who bid \$607.50 per year for the 1917-1922 Anacapa Island lease. In 1912, East Anacapa was excluded from the lease for lighthouse facilities.

-editor

Named Raymond LeFebvre, he was born in Brittany over a hundred years ago. He studied for the priesthood but was never ordained. Disenchanted with life in the church, LeFebvre chose the life of the sea, travelling on





A rare photograph with long-time island resident Raymond "Frenchy" LaDreau (left) and former island lessee H. Bay Webster (right). Circa 1940.  
(Channel Islands National Park Service collection)

## FRENCHIE

By Karen Jones Dowty

The following article first appeared in *Ventura County Historical Society's Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Spring 1978.

Raymond "Frenchy" LaDreau was a long-time resident of West Anacapa Island. He arrived some time around 1928, prior to the island's establishment as a National Monument. For about 28 years he lived a hermit-like existence with his cats on West Anacapa Island, serving as the unofficial Park Service representative, reporting acts of vandalism and island activities. He left West Anacapa Island after incurring injuries in a fall. What became of him remains a mystery. Today his homestead cove bears his name.

Little is visible from the Ventura County coastline in the gray month of June. An occasional boat or gull may pass; but the Island of Anacapa, only 11 miles from the coast, cannot be seen at all. When the dry East Winds have cleared the air of moisture in the autumn, this seaward portion of Ventura County looks close enough to touch.

It was on this rugged island, only a square mile in size, that one of the county's more colorful residents lived as a hermit. Few people knew his real name. Simply called Frenchie,\* he came to settle in the shoreward cove which now bears his name. Not at all the proverbial recluse, Frenchie welcomed all visitors to his sheer rock-walled home and enjoyed frivolities, gallantries and lengthy discussions on almost any subject shared over a glass or more of 'vino'.

Named Raymond Ledreaux,\*\* he was born in Brittany over a hundred years ago. He studied for the priesthood but was never ordained. Disenchanted and bitter towards his church, Ledreaux chose the life of the sea, travelling on



merchant vessels to China and America. In San Pedro, California he met his future wife Emma. He and the love of his life had a few short years together. Three children were born. The flu epidemic of 1918, which killed so many, took Emma also. Filled with sorrow over her death, Frenchie searched for a life elsewhere. He tried living in Mexico and lobster fishing there. His grief not subsiding, the Frenchman sought solace in solitude and drinking wine. He moved north to the Channel Islands and finally settled on Anacapa in 1928.

At the cove where tidepool visitors now land, he made his home. Frenchie's huts were among the sunflower trees called *Coreopsis*. One shanty was his sleeping quarters. Another housed his gear: odds and ends collected from the cove beach, and materials to repair his lobster traps and skiffs. A third shack, perched on the rugged cove hillside, was used for guests. Nearby sat drums for the rainwater Frenchie collected because Anacapa is an island without fresh water.

People from Port Hueneme to Santa Barbara came to know Frenchie. His cook hut was a favorite gathering place for local fishermen and divers. In his customary red flannels and a three-day stubble on his face, Frenchie would be stoking the fire from a wood pile that housed his colony of semi-wild cats. Beer and wine would be passed around. The sea stories would start and so would another day in Frenchie's Cove.

Frenchie lived, as the island Indians had for hundreds of years, off the bounty of the sea. With traps he made from wood and wire and using empty wine bottles as floats, he caught lobster. The volcanic undersea terrain and the prolific kelp beds provided Frenchie with a never-ending supply of food. From one of his two heavy skiffs he fished the waters around the small islets of Anacapa. He rowed to other coves to collect abalone. Always he had spare seafood on hand; and on any weekend outing to Anacapa, Ventura County residents would take along a spare jug of wine to trade from some of Frenchie's catch.

Local coastal families enjoyed their vacations camping near Frenchie's huts. They would bring him canned goods, bread, cheese and wine and water when he needed it. With



*Frenchie's cabins, West Anacapa Island circa 1940. None is left today.*

*(Channel Islands National Park Service collection)*

supplies provided by the fishermen's wives, Frenchie would prepare his personal variety of bouillabaisse and other succulent seafood dishes. When the visiting children tired of fishing and playing in the colorful tidepools, they were always glad to return to camp to hear a story or two by Frenchie. Although alone most of the time on an otherwise



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

uninhabited island, Frenchie never lost his love of what he thought were the finer things in music and literature. A discussion of *Les Misérables* could occur just as likely in Frenchie's cook hut as in a Santa Barbara drawing room. The smallest audience was all that was required to prompt Frenchie to sing favorite arias in his fine tenor.

As the years passed, Frenchie's sorrow over the loss of his wife did not lessen and his wine drinking increased. Rarely did he go to the mainland; and then only for short visits to friends he had made while living on Anacapa. All who knew him loved him. He was kind and gentle to children, and they delighted in visiting the French gentleman on Anacapa. Women responded to his gallantry by bringing gifts from ashore. As his wine consumption increased so did his gallantry, but never was an unkind word heard from him.

Frenchie was 68 in 1954. The National Park Service personnel in charge of Anacapa, part of the Channel Islands National Monument, decided to move him ashore. So ended Frenchie's stay on that craggy, sea-girdled segment of Ventura County. Longtime friends from Port Hueneme bade him good-bye as he boarded the bus for Santa Barbara. His destination was not known and that was the last they ever saw of him.

\* Commonly spelled Frenchy.

\*\* Commonly spelled LaDreau.

--editor

### THE ANACAPA LIGHTHOUSE

By Karen Jones Dowty

*The following article first appeared in Ventura County Historical Society's Quarterly, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Spring 1978.*

*Anacapa Island is the only California Channel Island with a true lighthouse. Navigational lights are found on the other islands. During World War II, from 1942-1945 the light was turned off for the Pacific Coast blackout.*

High above the splashing surf at Anacapa Island's east end is a beacon guiding mariners navigating the California coast, the Anacapa Lighthouse. One of the last and most essential of the West coast lighthouses, the traditional white cylindrical structure was erected in 1932.

The first lighted aids to mariners in the Santa Barbara Channel were fires maintained on exposed promontories of Santa Cruz Island. Like the Egyptian and Roman beacons, they guided the Chumash fishing and trading canoes at night. It is believed that these Indians did most of their travelling by water after dark when the westerly wind had died down and the sea was calmer.

Starting with the first European explorations of the western Pacific coast, the islands were more of a hindrance to navigation than anything else. The Spanish galleons on the Manila route gave them a wide berth. But later American ships, using the convenient Santa Barbara Channel, took their chances of grounding on one of these sea-girdled mountain tops. Precipitously dense fogs that often shroud the islands and the channel they form made this course all the more dangerous. There were many groundings, the most famous being that of the sidewheel steamer *Winfield Scott* which crashed onto the rocks of Anacapa the night of



uninhabited island, Frenchie never lost his love of what he thought were the finer things in music and literature. A discussion of *Les Misérables* could occur just as likely in Frenchie's cook hut as in a Santa Barbara drawing room. The smallest audience was all that was required to prompt Frenchie to sing favorite arias in his fine tenor.

As the years passed, Frenchie's sorrow over the loss of his wife did not lessen and his wine drinking increased. Rarely did he go to the mainland; and then only for short visits to friends he had made while living on Anacapa. All who knew him loved him. He was kind and gentle to children, and they delighted in visiting the French gentleman on Anacapa. Women responded to his gallantry by bringing gifts from ashore. As his wine consumption increased so did his gallantry, but never was an unkind word heard from him.

Frenchie was 68 in 1954. The National Park Service personnel in charge of Anacapa, part of the Channel Islands National Monument, decided to move him ashore. So ended Frenchie's stay on that craggy, sea-girdled segment of Ventura County. Longtime friends from Port Hueneme bade him good-bye as he boarded the bus for Santa Barbara. His destination was not known and that was the last they ever saw of him.

\* Commonly spelled Frenchy.

\*\* Commonly spelled LaDreau.

—edit

## THE ANACAPA LIGHTHOUSE

By Karen Jones Dowty

*The following article first appeared in Ventura County Historical Society's Quarterly, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Spring 1978.*

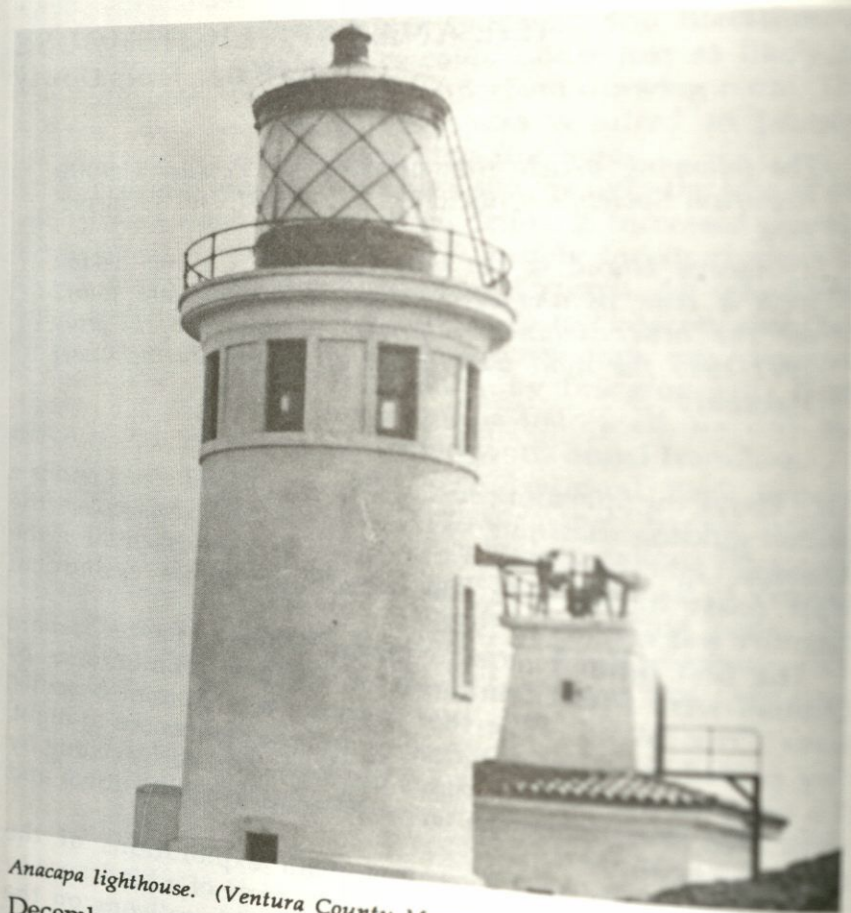
*Anacapa Island is the only California Channel Island with a true lighthouse. Navigational lights are found on the other islands. During World War II, from 1942-1945 the light was turned off for the Pacific Coast blackout.*

High above the splashing surf at Anacapa Island's east end is a beacon guiding mariners navigating the California coast, the Anacapa Lighthouse. One of the last and most essential of the West coast lighthouses, the traditional white cylindrical structure was erected in 1932.

The first lighted aids to mariners in the Santa Barbara Channel were fires maintained on exposed promontories of Santa Cruz Island. Like the Egyptian and Roman beacons, they guided the Chumash fishing and trading canoes at night. It is believed that these Indians did most of their travelling by water after dark when the westerly wind had died down and the sea was calmer.

Starting with the first European explorations of the western Pacific coast, the islands were more of a hindrance to navigation than anything else. The Spanish galleons on the Manila route gave them a wide berth. But later American ships, using the convenient Santa Barbara Channel, took their chances of grounding on one of these sea-girdled mountain tops. Precipitously dense fogs that often shroud the islands and the channel they form made this course all the more dangerous. There were many groundings, the most famous being that of the sidewheel steamer *Winfield Scott* which crashed onto the rocks of Anacapa the night of





Anacapa lighthouse. (Ventura County Museum of History & Art collection)

December 2, 1853, in a pea soup fog. The 250 passengers and crew waited ashore eight days before being rescued; they scavenged for food and were afforded little shelter on that nearly barren series of rocks.

The plight of the Winfield Scott helped draw attention to the need for a lighthouse at this entrance to the channel. But with financial forces and a survey showing the impossibility of construction of a lighthouse above East Anacapa's sheer cliffs then, a smaller, cheaper and less effective beacon was

built across the channel at Point Hueneme.<sup>1</sup> Shipping traffic continued to increase geometrically. Finally the Bureau of Lighthouses was allocated monies in 1912 for a skeleton tower supporting an unmanned beacon near the present site. It was replaced in 1932 by the structure we see today. This lighthouse was staffed by four Coast Guardsmen; they lived on East Anacapa with their families. After automation of the lighthouse in 1968-9, all of the dwellings but one were razed.\* It is now used and maintained by Channel Islands National Monument rangers.

The catadioptric light (using both a reflective mirror and a refractive lens) is 1,200,000 candlepower. The power is generated in a nearby outbuilding. About four thousand gallons of diesel are consumed per year, a mere pittance to pay to guide ships that each consume five times that quantity of bunker fuel per day. The refractive lens is the classic type invented before the turn of the century by Augustin-Jean Fresnel, a pioneer in the field of optics who also designed the lens integral to most cameras today.

Perched at an elevation of 277 feet, the Anacapa light is visible for 24 miles and houses a radio beacon and an electronic foghorn that can be heard along the adjacent mainland. Visitors to East Anacapa are cautioned against approaching too close to the lighthouse because the automatic foghorn can cause serious and permanent damage to one's hearing. The lighthouse is maintained and checked by Coast Guard personnel at Oxnard.

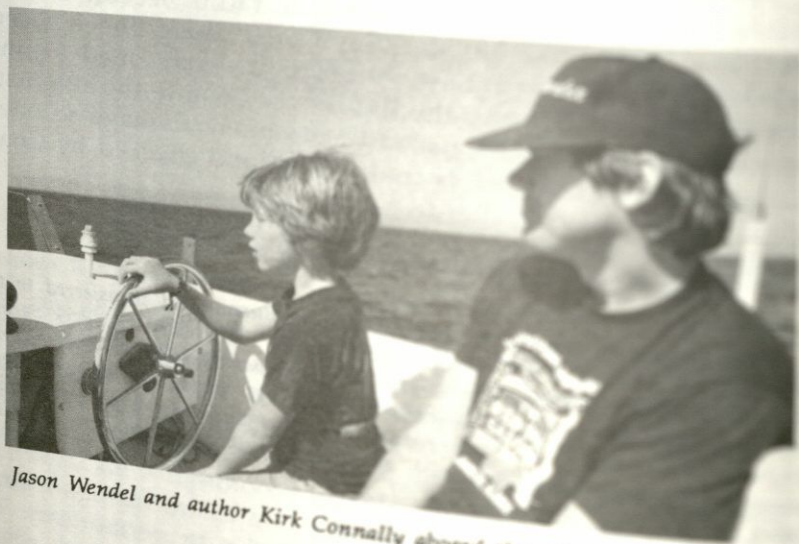
1. VCHSQ, June 1697 (v. 12, #3, p. 12, 17, 20-5).

\*The buildings erected by the Lighthouse Bureau and transferred to the Coast Guard were in a bad state of disrepair by 1970 when the Park Service assumed responsibility for them. The complex was refurbished and repaired, keeping a Spanish style architecture. Buildings include a three bedroom ranger residence, a generator building, and a combination maintenance-storage building with a portion of it converted into a visitor center. - editor





The Island Packer unloading sea scouts and camping equipment at Frenchy's Cove, 1969.  
(Island Packers collection)



Jason Wendel and author Kirk Connally aboard the M.V. George.  
(Photograph by William E. Connolly)

## ISLAND PACKERS

By Kirk L. Connally

This article was first published as a four-part series in *Newswaves*, the publication of Friends of Channel Island National Park: Spring, Fall, 1988; Winter, Spring, 1989. It is published here in its entirety for the first time.

Kirk L. Connally is the second of four children born to Bill and Lil Connally. At age 17, Kirk attended the California Maritime Academy where he was graduated in 1975. Today he serves as Vice-President of Island Packers, Inc. In its twenty one years of operations, family owned and operated Island Packers has safely transported over 600,000 visitors to California's Northern Channel Islands.

### First Trip to Anacapa Island

Ever since we could walk, our father, Bill Connally, took the four of us kids on camping trips. As our legs grew longer, so too did the hikes, as he led us farther afield until eventually we had hiked many hundreds of miles throughout the Sierra Nevada and Los Padres National Forest. In 1966 we moved to the coast and saw the familiar silhouette of Anacapa Island beckoning offshore. Someone told Bill that it was a "National Monument" with its headquarters on South A Street in Oxnard. On visiting the "headquarters" at its prestigious downtown location, we found that Anacapa was indeed a National Monument but without public transportation or a permanent ranger. A seasonal ranger was stationed at Frenchy's Cove on West Anacapa only in the summer months, and the Coast Guard occupied East Anacapa. We were welcomed to hike and camp anywhere on Middle or



West Anacapa provided we could find a way to get there.

Undaunted, Bill stomped the docks for a few days until he found "Jake the Snake" who would take us to Anacapa Island for \$50.00. Although our mother, Lil, thought \$50.00 was an outrageous sum of money, the thought of a two week Christmas vacation without kids underfoot prevailed and Jake was paid out of the proverbial All American cookie jar.

On the day of the trip we loaded Jake's 40 foot boat with several thousand pounds of food and gear, including a borrowed 12 foot rowboat, an old army raft, and an 8 foot dinghy. Jake scowled as his boat settled deeper and deeper into the water. The seas were calm as we departed Ventura Harbor and Jake smiled as he thought of the easy \$50.00 he was making. Unfortunately we started sinking when only two miles from Anacapa. Father jury-rigged a patch, but Jake was turning back anyway. We abandoned ship, and towing the old army raft full of gear, rowed the last two miles to the island.

Our first campsite for four days was the saddle at the west end of Anacapa Island. The wind howled every night. We soon discovered the large Anacapa rats, (or they discovered us), and each evening we kids spent hours trying to hit them with shovels. The rats went unharmed and made off with a treasure of Baby Ruth candy bars. The most vivid memory of those evenings was finding a rat perched on our sleeping father's head while munching a Baby Ruth candy bar. It was a great temptation catching a rat so preoccupied, but our good upbringing prevailed and thus father was spared the shovel.

Leaving behind what we named "Rat Point", we continued rowing, hiking, and exploring the three Anacapas for the following two weeks. The weather was beautiful and to us this was paradise. We fell in love with the "rock". And little known to us, father had launched a scheme in his mind that was to become the Island Packers Company.

### *The Launching of the Island Packer*

Bill Connally had always dreamed of starting a pack station in the High Sierra, but now that the Channel Islands bug had bitten him, the thought of "packing people in" to the

islands occupied more and more of his "grand scheming" time.

He talked at length to anyone who would listen, (and even to those who would not), of a plan for an island transportation business. It did not seem to matter to him that he already had a full-time job as a design engineer in Newbury Park while also going to night school to get his long neglected high school diploma. And no matter that a boat would be needed and we could not afford one. Bill could not find any valid reasons for not going into the boat business.

In 1967, Ventura Harbor was still in its humble beginnings with a not so humble, often surf-choked entrance. Whenever near disaster would strike a hapless boater in the entrance, quite often all the locals in the Wheelhouse Bar would tumble down the docks and come to the rescue in the old fishing boat *Verna F.* This duty fell upon her mainly because she always seemed to be laying at the docks—neglected, rust streaked, and with her bilges full of water. But she was sturdy and sea worthy, and getting battered in the surf never seemed to do her much harm. Bill could see that this World War II vintage converted Navy launch had potential; and besides, she was for sale "real cheap." He came home one night and proudly announced to the family that he had arranged a deal to buy the old *Verna F.*

I remember when we first hauled the old girl out of the water. We kids thought this was just great, of course not knowing that all our weekends for the next year had just been cancelled. I think our mother, Lil, cried as she watched the water draining from every seam of *Verna's* rust-streaked hull. Father, however, was already crawling all through the boat making his endless lists of all the things we were going to do to the boat. He was reliving the greater part of his youth as an engineer on banana freighters in Central America.

Work started in earnest as Bill figured the "tourist season" wasn't far away, and we had yet to haul our first paying passenger. We kids became "slave labor," justified by way of a little notebook whereby we were paid "on the books" \$10 a day. Somehow that book has not materialized even to this day.



But we weren't the only ones. People would come by to give us advice, and more often than not would end up on the business end of a paint brush. Many of Bill's white collar co-workers at the plant were infected with his enthusiasm and spent many of their weekends giving much needed help. One of the worst jobs aboard was scraping and re-leading the bilges. Father then formed the secret society of the "Royal Order of the Golden Bilge," and competition became fierce in the various compartments. The bilges were completed in record time!

By Mother's Day of 1968, the *Verna F* had emerged as the new *Island Packer*. She was 52' of gleaming white paint with her name painted in gold leaf on a flowing blue banner on either bow. There were four gold stars following the name—one each for the Connally kids. A golden eagle adorned the front of the wheelhouse. As 100 of our old and new found friends arrived to watch mother break the traditional champagne bottle across her bow, the *Island Packer* was launched and our lives would never be the same.

#### Row, row, row your boat . . .

In the spring of 1968, the new Island Packers Company set up shop in a brightly colored trailer placed at the launching ramp in Ventura Harbor. Bill Connally printed a stack of handwritten flyers that announced our intentions to provide regular scheduled transportation to Anacapa Island. The fare was to be \$5.00 for a non-landing tour and \$7.50 for one with landing.

Bill hired "Curley Oliver" as captain of our vessel, the *Island Packer*, while the four of us kids, Mark, Kirk, Brad and Cherryl, and friend James Ogle became crew.

The only thing missing were some skiffs, so father traded some free passes for a couple of old Lake Piru rowboats. They were in poor, battered condition loosely assembled with nails, but nothing that a few more nails and a bucket of orange paint wouldn't fix. With repairs complete, we were ready for our first passenger run to the Channel Islands National Monument.

The first run of the *Island Packer* was filled to capacity. After all the tickets were collected, however, we realized that we only had two fare-paying passengers aboard. Father's enthusiasm for giving out free boat rides made itself known on that day and continued the rest of his life.

No matter, it was good for promotion, he said, and onlookers were impressed with the full boat load of people going to the island for the day. Everyone loved the old *Island Packer* despite her dock-mongrel reputation. What she lacked in amenities, the crew made up in enthusiasm. We stowed everyone's gear below, which is to say we put it in the bilge under the cabin.

The cabin was very small and in rough weather no more than a dozen people could crowd into its shelter. The others were not left out in the cold, however, as we issued tarps of different sizes and built tents fore and aft to keep everyone dry. It was quite a sight seeing the *Island Packer* come into port so decorated. Not seen beneath all those tarps would be sister Cherryl crawling about serving free hot chocolate and popcorn.

And don't forget the great watermelon raffle whose winner was expected to share with the other 40 passengers. I think the only disgruntled person in that boat was the captain who was denied the relative dryness of the main deck tent city and who had to steer from the open bridge taking whatever Mother Nature threw at him (usually water).

Everyone else loved the old *Packer*. They went home and told their friends, and gradually the ratio of paying passengers to "freebies" increased.

At the island the real fun began for the passengers. We kids rowed them all ashore at Frenchy's Cove, and also took them in skiffs to visit Frenchy's Cave, and to drift through the offshore kelp beds.

Most had a pleasant day just picnicking, swimming or exploring the tidepools. Most of what I remember of those days was the endless rowing! And the endless questions!

It was an attempt to answer those questions that *Island Packer's* real interpretive program began. At first it was quite crude, of course, with such cursory and inaccurate answers



## Santa Cruz Island Foundation

such as: "Oh, that's a seagull, if it's black and white, or a sea duck if it's black," or "Frenchy lived on the island anywhere from 30 to 50 years," and, "that big plant with the yellow flowers is 'corey opsick.'"

But eventually we learned about island endemics, geology, ecosystems, and surrounding marine life. And yes, the island did go all the way to the bottom (and still does).

From the very first, the whole business centered around getting folks safely ashore. The Lake Piru skiffs barely made it through one summer and only lots of bailing and seagulls feathers plugged in the nail holes kept them afloat.

Eventually, we acquired more skiffs (not from Lake Piru), and our operation, through luck and refined techniques, became quite professional.

Further, we had a new skiff built which we painted orange and appropriately named the *Orange Skiff*. It was almost two years later before we discovered (and could afford) outboards.

By the fall of 1969 "Connally's Folly," as many had called it, was doing very well. We were offering a variety of trips that were only limited to Bill's imagination. Mostly, he tried to accommodate youth groups, campers and schools. The new "floating classroom" program was also launched.

None of this would have been possible without the help of so many friends and the unusually good luck that many times accompanies newcomers.

The *Island Packer* had already survived the devastating flood that largely destroyed Ventura Harbor earlier that year. Little did we realize that her luck would run out at Anacapa Island in December of 1969.

### Bill Connally's "Last Grand Scheme"

During the fall of 1969, the Island Packers Company was going through many changes. We leased the old WWII vintage *Paisano*, thus giving us a grand fleet of two vessels. The *Paisano* had bunks which allowed us to start regular scheduled runs to Santa Barbara Island. The dive camp at Albert's Anchorage on the south side of Santa Cruz Island was closed by a landslide, but the hunter trips with the Santa

## Island Packers

Cruz Island Hunt Club continued to Prisoners' Harbor on the north side of the island. At East Anacapa Island, the Coast Guard had automated the lighthouse but the public was still only allowed to land at Frenchy's Cove on West Anacapa. Nevertheless, business was good and Bill Connally was hard at work developing his newest "grand scheme" which was the floating classroom. Bill's enthusiasm recruited two local educators, John Prince and Les Meridith, who became deckhand/instructors on the *Paisano*. With their help, the floating classroom became a reality. Bill continued taking night classes in marine biology/oceanography at Ventura College and there found another supporter in Thor Wilsrud, a biology instructor. He also became a founding member of the Ventura County Oceanographic Foundation and the Santa Barbara Underseas Foundation. Neither of these organizations survives today as does Island Packers Floating Classroom, possibly due to Bill's insistence that our programs be self-supportive and not rely on any outside funding.

The old *Island Packer* stayed busy, even with the addition of the *Paisano*. On December 8, 1969, she was returning from the old dive camp at Santa Cruz with just a deckhand and Captain aboard. She broke down a few miles from Anacapa Island and drifted for hours while rescue efforts were launched. The USCG cutter *Pt. Judith* got underway from Santa Barbara, but promptly ran aground on a sand bar where she stayed until the next high tide. The family finally got word of the *Packer's* dilemma and we prepared the *Paisano* to offer assistance. By the time we found a Captain, however, the *Pt. Judith* was underway again and finally made it to East Anacapa Island through the growing seas and got a tow line to her just as the anchor line parted. However, the old *Packer* had made up her mind, and the tow bitts broke as she headed for the rocks. The crew abandoned ship and were saved by the Coast Guard. Through the darkness and breaking seas, the Captain saw her lights go out as she slammed into the cliffs of Anacapa Island.

The next morning, we took the *Paisano* out to Anacapa and we kids dove on her remains. There were only pieces left and we saved only a few, primarily in remembrance of the



### Santa Cruz Island Foundation

old girl. Father announced that the insurance would not replace her and that we would have to start all over again. We voted to continue the Island Packers Company and traded half interest in the company for half interest in the *Paisano*.

Over the next several months, the company started to recover from the loss of the *Island Packer*. Someone reported seeing a battered orange skiff in the navy yard at Port Hueneme. Apparently, it had broken loose when the *Packer* went on the rocks and had drifted for a month before being found off Catalina Island. We patched it up and put it back into service. The *Paisano* was retired to a local bean field in 1975 and replaced by the *Sunfish*. We continued to grow in Ventura Harbor, finally ending up at our present location when the Visitor's Center opened in 1981.

In July of 1987, Bill Connally was down in the bilges of an IPCO boat lifting batteries. He hurt his back and had to be admitted to the veteran's hospital. There he "gave them hell" for a month while they did tests to determine what was wrong. Even while there, and in constant pain, he continued to give free boat rides to other patients and to talk about IPCO and the Channel Islands. Finally, however, he tired of all the tests and launched a rescue effort to get him back to Ventura. He was wheeled into the office to say "hi" to the gang on November 14. On November 22, 1987, he died of cancer.

Bill Connally's ashes are buried on a mountain peak deep in the mountains of his old stomping grounds. To go there, one would have to hike many miles, wade through chest deep icy streams, push through thick brush and traverse perilously narrow ridges. Once there, and overlooking miles of beautiful and wild country, you would find a bronze plaque with the following inscription:

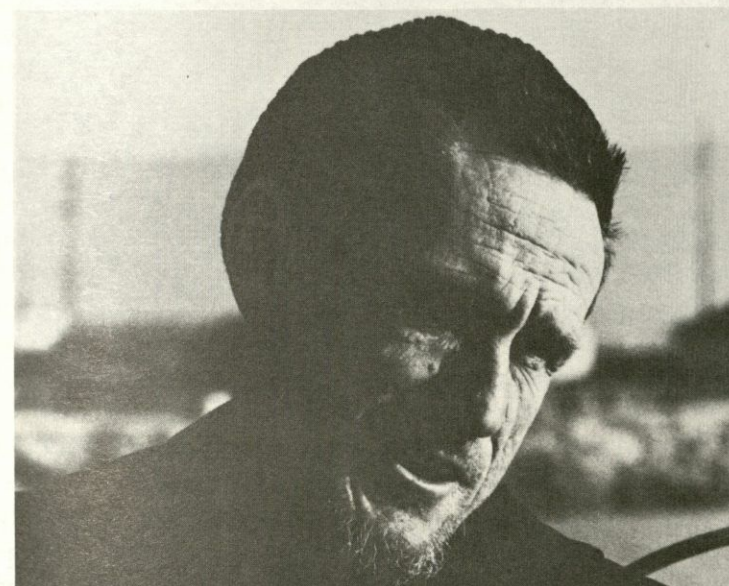
Bill M. Connally  
August 27, 1929—November 22, 1987  
"Fearless Father's Last Grand Scheme"

Island Packers Company held its 20th anniversary last year and is continuing its services to all the islands within the Channel Islands National Park. We will all miss Bill's wild

### Island Packers

imagination and energy, but still find the islands as exciting now as they were over 22 years ago when we first rowed ashore with him to camp on Anacapa Island. I'm in charge of the "grand scheme department" now and, with the rest of the family, find these particularly gratifying times to still be involved in the shaping of the future of the Channel Islands National Park.

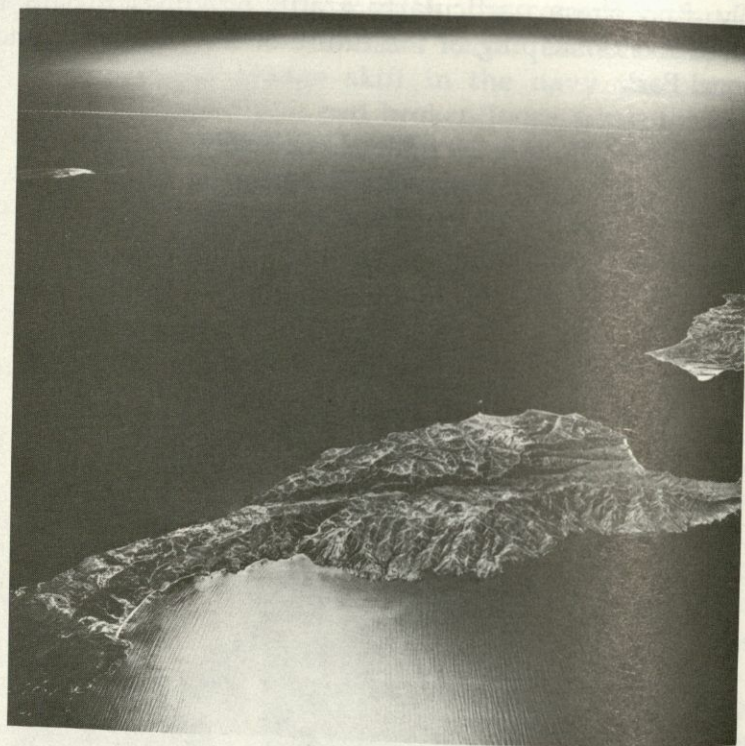
Kirk L. Connally  
Vice-President  
Island Packers, Inc.



Bill Connally (1929 - 1987), founder of Island Packers.  
(Island Packers collection)



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*



**Santa Cruz Island**

Santa Cruz Island is the largest of all the California Channel Islands. It is 96 square miles or about 62,000 acres, and is approximately 22 miles long, and between two and six miles wide. (The island is larger than the District of Columbia, and is over four times the size of Manhattan.) It lies about 22-25 miles off the adjacent mainland coast between Goleta and Ventura, and is in Santa Barbara County. Picacho Diablo at 2434 feet is the highest point. Several other peaks surpass the 2000 foot elevation on the island's rugged north side.

### *Santa Cruz Island*

#### **Ownership History**

Following the Indian era, the Spanish era, and the Mexican era, Santa Cruz Island entered California statehood as a privately owned island. Andres Castillero, to whom the island had been granted in 1839 by Mexico, sold it in 1857 to William E. Barron. Barron held title to the island for twelve years, selling it in 1869 to ten men who formed the Santa Cruz Island Company. One of these men, Frenchman Justinian Caire, played the pivotal role in the island's future.

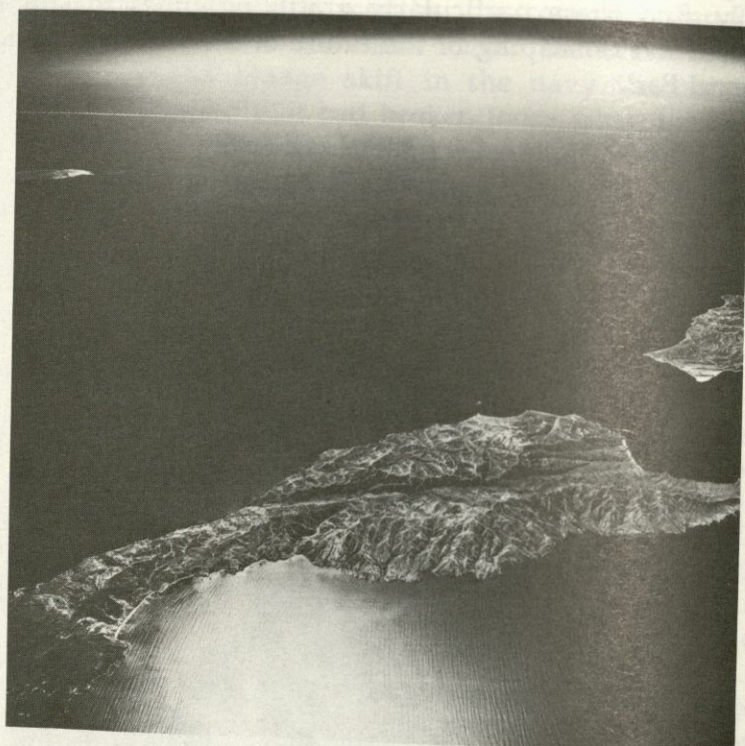
Between 1869 and 1880, Caire acquired all of the stock in the Santa Cruz Island Company, and in 1880 he paid his first visit to the island. Under his direction, various agricultural and ranching interests were implemented, including the development of a large winery, and the raising of sheep and cattle. Nine out-ranches of varying importance augmented the operations of the Main Ranch located in the island's Central Valley. Justinian Caire ran a very efficient and almost entirely self-contained island venture. He died in 1897, leaving the stock in the Santa Cruz Island Company to his wife, Albina, who, in turn, distributed some stock to the six surviving children. In 1910, a \$5 corporation renewal fee was not paid, and the Company was legally dissolved. Extensive litigation between Caire family members ensued, and in 1925 through court action, the island was partitioned seven ways. The two easternmost parcels, containing Scorpion and Smugglers Ranches, are now retained by great grandchildren of Justinian Caire. They are scheduled to be purchased by the National Park Service in the near future. The five westernmost parcels were reunited to form the Santa Cruz Island Company. In 1937 they were sold to Los Angeles businessman, Edwin Stanton.

The Stanton family occupied Santa Cruz Island for fifty years (1937-1987). Edwin Stanton died in 1963, and the Presidency of the Santa Cruz Island Company passed to his only surviving son, Carey. Carey Stanton died in 1987. With his death, according to his wishes, the holdings of the Santa Cruz Island Company passed to The Nature Conservancy.

-editor



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*



**Santa Cruz Island**

Santa Cruz Island is the largest of all the California Channel Islands. It is 96 square miles or about 62,000 acres, and is approximately 22 miles long, and between two and six miles wide. (The island is larger than the District of Columbia, and is over four times the size of Manhattan.) It lies about 22-25 miles off the adjacent mainland coast between Goleta and Ventura, and is in Santa Barbara County. Picacho Diablo at 2434 feet is the highest point. Several other peaks surpass the 2000 foot elevation on the island's rugged north side.

### *Santa Cruz Island*

#### **Ownership History**

Following the Indian era, the Spanish era, and the Mexican era, Santa Cruz Island entered California statehood as a privately owned island. Andres Castillero, to whom the island had been granted in 1839 by Mexico, sold it in 1857 to William E. Barron. Barron held title to the island for twelve years, selling it in 1869 to ten men who formed the Santa Cruz Island Company. One of these men, Frenchman Justinian Caire, played the pivotal role in the island's future.

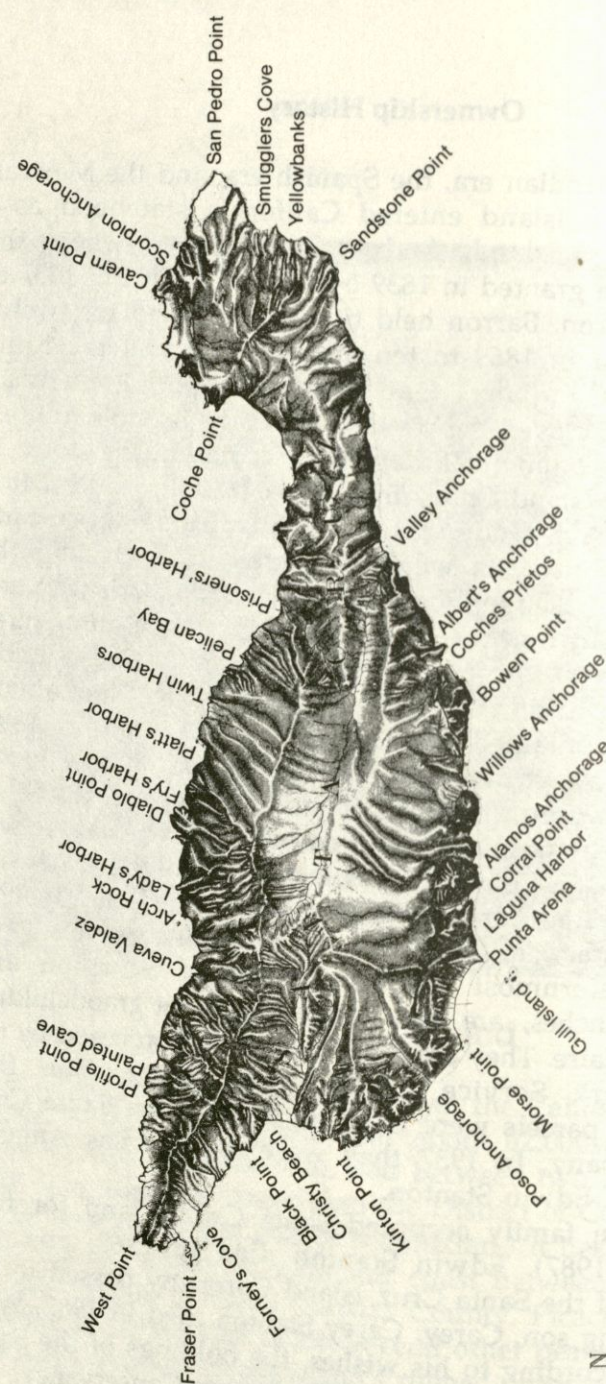
Between 1869 and 1880, Caire acquired all of the stock in the Santa Cruz Island Company, and in 1880 he paid his first visit to the island. Under his direction, various agricultural and ranching interests were implemented, including the development of a large winery, and the raising of sheep and cattle. Nine out-ranches of varying importance augmented the operations of the Main Ranch located in the island's Central Valley. Justinian Caire ran a very efficient and almost entirely self-contained island venture. He died in 1897, leaving the stock in the Santa Cruz Island Company to his wife, Albina, who, in turn, distributed, some stock to the six surviving children. In 1910, a \$5 corporation renewal fee was not paid, and the Company was legally dissolved. Extensive litigation between Caire family members ensued, and in 1925 through court action, the island was partitioned seven ways. The two easternmost parcels, containing Scorpion and Smugglers Ranches, are now retained by great grandchildren of Justinian Caire. They are scheduled to be purchased by the National Park Service in the near future. The five westernmost parcels were reunited to form the Santa Cruz Island Company. In 1937 they were sold to Los Angeles businessman, Edwin Stanton.

The Stanton family occupied Santa Cruz Island for fifty years (1937-1987). Edwin Stanton died in 1963, and the Presidency of the Santa Cruz Island Company passed to his only surviving son, Carey. Carey Stanton died in 1987. With his death, according to his wishes, the holdings of the Santa Cruz Island Company passed to The Nature Conservancy.

-editor



# Santa Cruz Island Foundation



SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

## SANTA CRUZ ISLAND: SPANISH PERIOD TO THE PRESENT By Carey Stanton and Marla Daily

The following article was presented by Carey Stanton on March 2, 1987 at the Third California Islands Symposium held at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. It is published here for the first time.

Carey Stanton (1923-1987) died at his island home on December 8, 1987. He lived to celebrate his family's 50th anniversary on Santa Cruz Island, April 10, 1937-1987. Carey Stanton devoted much of his life to preserving Santa Cruz Island and its history. As a great part of his legacy, the western 9/10ths of the island passed to the non-profit Nature Conservancy. His tangible personal property, collections of furniture, silver, art, books, maps and island archives passed to the non-profit Santa Cruz Island Foundation of which Marla Daily is now President.

### Abstract

Santa Cruz Island is the largest privately owned island off the Continental United States, encompassing 96 square miles. For comparison, it is over four times the size of Manhattan (22 square miles) or Bermuda (19 square miles), and larger than the District of Columbia (61 square miles). Today's preservation of Santa Cruz Island was made possible by a chain of events beginning with the Spanish occupation of California in 1769, and continuing through the Mexican Era (1821-1848) to American occupation and statehood (1850). Private land ownership of Santa Cruz Island continues to the present, and is insured for the future.



### Introduction

In 1937, Edwin Stanton purchased the western nine-tenths of Santa Cruz Island from Caire family members. Then, as now, Santa Cruz Island represented a marvelously-preserved, 19th century working ranch. April 10, 1987 marks the 50th anniversary of the Stanton family's ownership, today carried on by Carey Stanton, Edwin Stanton's son. The legacy preceeding today's preservation of Santa Cruz Island can be traced through the island's history, from the Spanish occupation of Alta California to the present day.

### The Spanish Era: 1769-1822

The history of European man on Santa Cruz Island began on October 13, 1542 with the arrival of explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo. Sailing for the Spanish Government, his expedition is credited with being the first to reach the coast of California. Journals of the expedition indicate that although Santa Cruz Island was sighted and called by a different name, no one is known to have landed upon the island. During the next two and a half centuries, at least four expeditions visited Santa Cruz Island, including those of Cermeño in 1595, Vizcaíno in 1602, Portolá in 1769, and Vancouver in 1795 (Bancroft 1886). These early voyagers, while charting and writing of their travels, paid more attention to the Indian-occupied mainland than they did to the similarly occupied offshore islands, whose shelters and coves they welcomed in inclement weather. Some stopped to take on wood and water as was available and convenient.

The 1769 expedition led by Portolá for the King of Spain was the first to claim ownership of the island in the name of the King. It is also this expedition which is credited with the naming of the island *Isla de la Santa Cruz*. This expedition was divided into two parts: the land exploration led by Don Gaspar Portolá and Fray Junipero Serra, and the seagoing exploration led by Juan Pérez, composed of the two ships *San Antonio* and

*San Carlos*. The *San Antonio*, commanded by Juan Pérez, was the first to reach Santa Cruz Island. On board was a Franciscan priest, Fray Juan Vizcaíno (not to be confused with the 1602 explorer of the same name) who kept a sea diary describing Santa Cruz Island and its inhabitants. At the place now called Prisoners' Harbor, Fray Vizcaíno is said to have gone ashore and to have forgotten his walking staff which was topped with a small iron cross. The staff, given up for lost due to its valuable iron parts coveted by native Indians, was returned the next day to Vizcaíno by some Indians. (Woodward 1959) From this incident the island is said to have been named, *Isla de la Santa Cruz*—Island of the Holy Cross.

During Spain's ownership of Santa Cruz Island, Chumash Indians continued to live on the island, though in decreasing numbers. As early as 1770, as mainland mission development began, the Spanish Government in Mexico proposed the building of a mission on Santa Cruz Island to "bring the Gospel to the inhabitants of the Channel Islands" (Englehardt 1923). These plans were set aside until the first part of the 18th century, when Franciscan Father Tapis instituted a proposal for the building and development of a mission community on Santa Cruz Island which would serve both Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islanders. In 1805, Tapis estimated a population of 1800 Chumash on the two islands (Tapis 1805). By 1807 however, measles had spread among the Indians, greatly reducing their numbers. As a result, the island mission proposal never came to fruition, and by 1814 the majority of island Chumash were removed to the mainland missions at Santa Barbara and San Buenaventura. According to mission records, the last island Chumash were baptized in 1822 (Johnson 1982).

### The Mexican Era: 1822-1848

The Mexican Era in California began in 1822 with the belated notice of the independence of Mexico from Spain in 1821. After Mexico's long and successful war of independence



### Introduction

In 1937, Edwin Stanton purchased the western nine-tenths of Santa Cruz Island from Caire family members. Then, as now, Santa Cruz Island represented a marvelously-preserved, 19th century working ranch. April 10, 1987 marks the 50th anniversary of the Stanton family's ownership, today carried on by Carey Stanton, Edwin Stanton's son. The legacy preceeding today's preservation of Santa Cruz Island can be traced through the island's history, from the Spanish occupation of Alta California to the present day.

### The Spanish Era: 1769-1822

The history of European man on Santa Cruz Island began on October 13, 1542 with the arrival of explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo. Sailing for the Spanish Government, his expedition is credited with being the first to reach the coast of California. Journals of the expedition indicate that although Santa Cruz Island was sighted and called by a different name, no one is known to have landed upon the island. During the next two and a half centuries, at least four expeditions visited Santa Cruz Island, including those of Cermeño in 1595, Vizcaíno in 1602, Portolá in 1769, and Vancouver in 1795 (Bancroft 1886). These early voyagers, while charting and writing of their travels, paid more attention to the Indian-occupied mainland than they did to the similarly occupied offshore islands, whose shelters and coves they welcomed in inclement weather. Some stopped to take on wood and water as was available and convenient.

The 1769 expedition led by Portolá for the King of Spain was the first to claim ownership of the island in the name of the King. It is also this expedition which is credited with the naming of the island *Isla de la Santa Cruz*. This expedition was divided into two parts: the land exploration led by Don Gaspar Portolá and Fray Junipero Serra, and the seagoing exploration led by Juan Pérez, composed of the two ships *San Antonio* and

*San Carlos*. The *San Antonio*, commanded by Juan Pérez, was the first to reach Santa Cruz Island. On board was a Franciscan priest, Fray Juan Vizcaíno (not to be confused with the 1602 explorer of the same name) who kept a sea diary describing Santa Cruz Island and its inhabitants. At the place now called Prisoners' Harbor, Fray Vizcaíno is said to have gone ashore and to have forgotten his walking staff which was topped with a small iron cross. The staff, given up for lost due to its valuable iron parts coveted by native Indians, was returned the next day to Vizcaíno by some Indians. (Woodward 1959) From this incident the island is said to have been named, *Isla de la Santa Cruz*—Island of the Holy Cross.

During Spain's ownership of Santa Cruz Island, Chumash Indians continued to live on the island, though in decreasing numbers. As early as 1770, as mainland mission development began, the Spanish Government in Mexico proposed the building of a mission on Santa Cruz Island to "bring the Gospel to the inhabitants of the Channel Islands" (Englehardt 1923). These plans were set aside until the first part of the 18th century, when Franciscan Father Tapis instituted a proposal for the building and development of a mission community on Santa Cruz Island which would serve both Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islanders. In 1805, Tapis estimated a population of 1800 Chumash on the two islands (Tapis 1805). By 1807 however, measles had spread among the Indians, greatly reducing their numbers. As a result, the island mission proposal never came to fruition, and by 1814 the majority of island Chumash were removed to the mainland missions at Santa Barbara and San Buenaventura. According to mission records, the last island Chumash were baptized in 1822 (Johnson 1982).

### The Mexican Era: 1822-1848

The Mexican Era in California began in 1822 with the belated notice of the independence of Mexico from Spain in 1821. After Mexico's long and successful war of independence



came the temporary formation of a Mexican Empire, followed by the 1823 formation of the new Republic of Mexico. Santa Cruz Island, along with Alta California, became a part of the new Republic of Mexico. Along with the creation of the Republic came the secularization of the missions and the granting of large amounts of California land to leading families. The mainland was a land covered by ranches and open spaces. Adobe walls and red tile roofs became symbols of California architecture. There were no railroads, bridges, telephones, or automobiles. Foreign intrusion came via the sea in the form of Yankee traders. The government of Mexico was very unstable. California was served by a governor responsible to Mexico.

In the year 1829, the Secretary of Justice of Mexico issued a circular urging justices to sentence criminals to California presidios. In March of 1830, the ship *Maria Ester* from Acapulco arrived in Santa Barbara with as many as 83 convicts aboard (Ord 1956). Under the direction of Santa Barbara Presidio Comandante Don Romaldo Pacheco, some prisoners were landed in Santa Barbara, and others were sent to Santa Cruz Island with a supply of food and a few cattle. Those on the island eventually had their supplies destroyed by fire, and some managed to fashion rafts on which they returned to the mainland. Later the Comandante was obliged to send for the rest (ibid.). As a result of this episode, to this day, the harbor at which they were landed is called Prisoners' Harbor.

No Europeans are known to have settled permanently on Santa Cruz Island during the Spanish Era and the first years of the Mexican Era. After the removal of the Chumash, and then the temporary prisoners, presumably the island was uninhabited, with perhaps the exception of a few seasonal fish camps scattered about the island's shores.

In 1836, Juan Bautista Alvarado was made Governor of California, a position he was to hold for six years. On May 22, 1839, Governor Alvarado conveyed to Andres Castillero the Island of Santa Cruz "... (which) has for its boundaries the waters edge" (United States District Court 1857). With this grant, Castillero became the first private owner of Santa Cruz

Island, a position he was to hold for 18 years (1839-1857). To this day, the island is owned to the water's edge, as specified in the original grant. It is not subject to a mean-high tide regulation.

In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo concluded the Mexican War. Contained within this treaty, without specifically mentioning the California offshore islands, was the territory of California. Periodically, the issue of the omission of the islands in the Treaty was brought up by various groups or persons trying to claim ownership. However, the Mexican government has set the issue at rest, status quo.

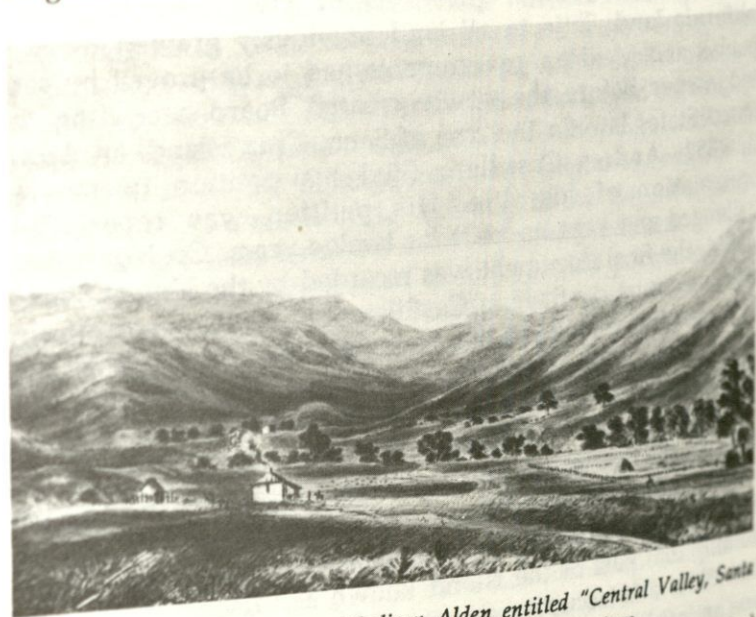
### **The American Era**

Soon after California was admitted to statehood in 1850, the United States government appointed a Land Claims Commission to settle questions of civil ownership of California land. Title to all land previously granted by the Spanish and Mexican governments had to be proven by the land owner before the newly created Board according to United States law. In the case of Santa Cruz Island, on April 13, 1852, Andres Castillero filed his petition to secure confirmation of his title. His petition was repeatedly challenged and kept in court for twelve years. On November 7, 1864, the final document was recorded by the United States Supreme Court confirming Castillero's rightful ownership. In the meantime however, he had sold the island. It is not known if Castillero actually visited Santa Cruz Island.

The first record of a structure on Santa Cruz Island appears in a Santa Barbara County Deed of Sale, dated November 12, 1852. For the sum of ten dollars, Thomas Jeffreys sold to Judge Charles Fernald "a certain frame house situated on the Island of Santa Cruz in the County of Santa Barbara, near the beach fronting that part of the Island known as Prisoners' Harbor." Its builder and occupant remain unknown, although the sale was an invalid one.



In 1853 during the later part of Castellero's eighteen year ownership of Santa Cruz Island, Dr. James Barron Shaw, an English physician residing in Santa Barbara, began supervising the island for Castellero. Shaw claimed to have been Castellero's agent since 1851, having paid the island's taxes since that year. According to Shaw, from December of 1852 until October of 1853, a man named James Box resided "in a little shanty" on the island raising pigs (United States District Court 1857). Perhaps this is the same structure as that which was sold invalidly at Prisoners' Harbor the month before Box moved to the island. In any event, as a result of Box's pig-raising enterprise, many of the animals subsequently became feral. Shaw is known to have brought purebred stock to the island, including sheep, cattle and horses. Under Shaw's management, the Santa Cruz Island Ranch soon became one of most admired sheep ranches in California. In 1853 the island was reportedly the chief supplier of mutton to the Los Angeles market (Newmark and Newmark 1930).



An 1855 watercolor by James Madison Alden entitled "Central Valley, Santa Cruz Island" shows the first known view of an island structure.  
(Santa Cruz Island Foundation collection)

The first known ranch house on Santa Cruz Island appears in a water color by James Madison Alden, dated 1855 and entitled "Rancho and Valley, Santa Cruz Island" (Stenzel 1975). The house does not look new. In addition to the ranch structure, the picture documents the presence of both animal husbandry (man on horseback) and agriculture (haystacks) on the island at that time.

In 1857, absentee island owner Andres Castellero sold the island to William E. Barron of San Francisco. Through the transfer of ownership from Castellero to Barron, and continuing until 1869, Dr. Shaw continued supervising the island for Barron, raising both sheep and cattle. Adobe and wooden ranch buildings, some of which still remain in use today, were constructed during Barron's twelve year ownership of Santa Cruz Island (1857-1869). In 1869 he sold it to ten San Franciscans who formed a corporation called the Santa Cruz Island Company. This was the first time that the island was to be owned by more than one person. Of these ten men, one man—Justinian Caire—was to emerge as Santa Cruz Island's sculptor of the future.

#### The Caire Era: 1869-1937

Justinian Caire was born in Briancon, France in 1827. He came to California on March 29, 1851 at the age of twenty-four, to establish a hardware business in San Francisco. In addition to supplying miners with all types of mining and assaying equipment, he imported for housewives such luxuries as porcelains from France and Sheffield plate from England (Jeanne Caire 1950). In 1854 he returned briefly to Genoa to marry his beloved Maria Cristina Sara Molfino, called Albina. They returned to California, and had six children who lived to maturity, two sons (Arthur and Frederic), and four daughters (Delphine, Amalie, Aglae and Helene). With the success of his business, Caire was able to diversify his investments, and in 1869 he became one of ten San Franciscans who invested in and formed the Santa Cruz Island Company.



Of the original ten shareholders in the Santa Cruz Island Company, at least six are known to have also been directors of the French Bank in San Francisco which was founded in 1860 and which failed in 1878. All of the shareholders in the Santa Cruz Island Company began as equals. However, in 1873 the Company reincorporated and shares were redistributed. By 1880, Frenchman shareholder Justinian Caire had acquired all of the stock in the corporation, becoming the island's sole owner. At this juncture, the island became unusual among California properties, with ownership reverting back to one person from ten.



Justinian Caire (1827-1897) at his home in Oakland, California. Circa 1880s.  
(Santa Cruz Island Foundation collection)

In 1880, eleven years after his initial investment, Justinian Caire paid his first visit to Santa Cruz Island to survey his holdings and to pursue the planning of what was to become one of the most prosperous, well-managed and beautiful ranches and vineyards in California (Jeanne Caire 1933). As Caire developed the island, he brought with him both the influences of France as well as Italy.

Under Caire's direction, buildings including ranch houses, bunk houses, barns, wineries, a chapel, mess-hall, blacksmith shop and saddle shop were constructed. Wherever possible, native island materials were used in combination with a Mediterranean style architecture. Island clays were used in the manufacture of bricks, which were fired in an underground kiln dug behind the main ranch. Limestone mortar, used in rubble and red brick construction, was baked in a separate kiln near the site of the quarried lime rock several miles from the main ranch. Stones were quarried and cut to shape on the island. A resident blacksmith forged wrought iron fittings, hinges, and decorative railings used on many of the island's buildings. Full-time employees included masons, carpenters, painters, team drivers, vaqueros, dairymen, a butcher, wagon-maker, cobbler, vintners, grape-pickers, sheep-shearers, and a sea captain and sailors to run the Company's 60 foot schooner *Santa Cruz* built in 1893 (Daily and Stanton 1983).

As Justinian Caire carefully planned the island's future, he developed a great variety of agricultural and ranching endeavors suitable to the island's climate and terrain. Sheep, numbering 50,000 by 1890, were raised for wool, meat, hide, and tallow. During round-up and shearing season, additional seasonal laborers would arrive on the island to spend long, laborious days, shearing the sheep by hand. Brush fences and runs were constructed about the island to guide these otherwise feral animals to the variously located corrals and shearing pens. Wool was hand-packed into large burlap sacks which were then sent to the mainland markets. Durham cattle were raised. Agricultural pursuits included the planting of crops such as hay and alfalfa, in addition to garden vegetables. Trees planted included olive, pear, fig, pomegranate, orange, apple, lemon, peach, plum, walnut, and almond. Italian stone pines, Eucalyptus, and Peruvian pepper trees added additional ornamentation. Caire's most extensive agricultural endeavor, however, was that of the development of the Santa Cruz Island winery.

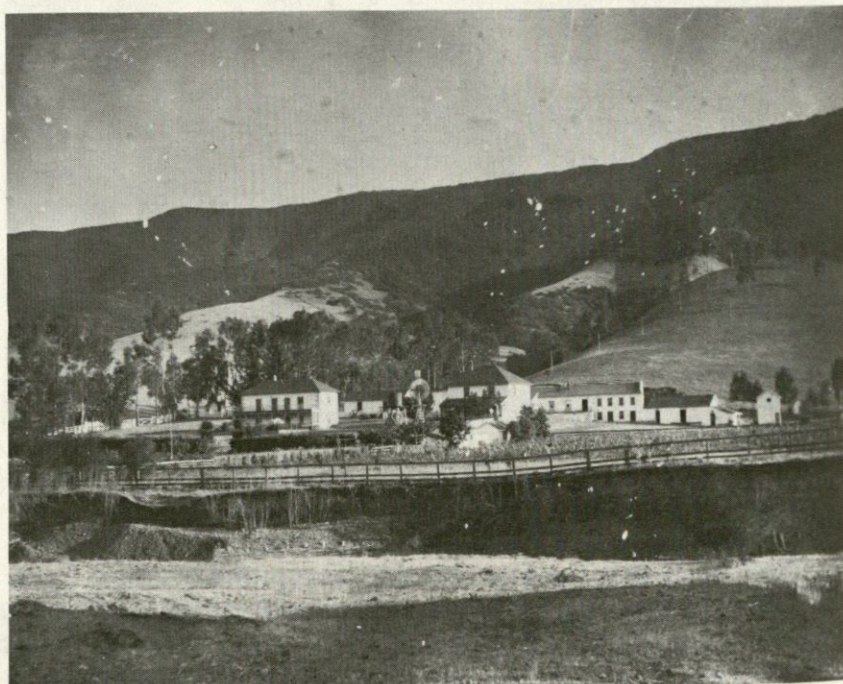
Over two hundred acres of the island's central valley were dry-farmed with Zinfandel, Reisling, Burgundy, Muscatel and



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

Grenache grapes, among others. Two large brick winery buildings served the crushing and fermenting operations, where the wine was then placed in hogsheads for shipment to San Francisco where it was then bottled. No bottle of Santa Cruz Island wine is known to survive today.

Under Caire's careful eye and masterful guidance, the island's efficiently run operations were almost entirely self-contained. Salt, flour, sugar and coffee were among the few staples required from the mainland. All of the work on the island's ninety-six square miles was done on horseback or with the aid of wagons and horse teams. Out-ranches were developed in various locations, including those of Prisoners' Harbor, Christy, Portezuela, Scorpion and Smugglers'. Justinian Caire's masterly plan for the island was unequaled.



*View of the main ranch. Late 1880s.*

*(Santa Cruz Island Foundation collection)*



## *Santa Cruz Island: Spanish Period to the Present*

In December 1897, Justinian Caire died, having transferred all of the stock in the Santa Cruz Island Company to his beloved wife Albina. She in turn transferred part of her stock to her children. Beginning about 1910, extensive litigation within the Caire family followed, and by court order, in 1925 the island was partitioned into seven tracts. Tracts 1-5 represented the western 9/10ths of Santa Cruz Island, and tracts 6 and 7 comprised the eastern end of the island, geographically divided from the rest by a north/south running mountain ridge. Caire daughters Amelie and Aglae were awarded tracts 6 and 7, which today remain owned by Caire descendants. This portion of Santa Cruz Island, the eastern 6300 acres, will soon become a part of the Channel Islands National Park through Government purchase. Tracts 1-5 were awarded to Albina, Justinian's widow, and children Arthur, Frederic, Delphine and Helene. This western 9/10ths of Santa Cruz Island was reunited as the Santa Cruz Island Company, whose assets were put on the market in 1927.

The Santa Cruz Island Company assets remained on the market for over a decade, passing through part of the Great Depression years unsold.

### **The Stanton Years: 1973-Current**

In 1937, Los Angeles businessman Edwin Stanton purchased the assets of the Santa Cruz Island Company. His was the only bona fide offer tendered. For the first two years of his ownership, Stanton tried to revive and improve the sheep business. It was a difficult task because the sheep had become feral and were difficult to round-up and shear. Emphasis was then switched to cattle, and polled Herefords were introduced. They remain the mainstay of the island's ranching operations today. Prohibition in 1920 had stopped the making and transport of wine from the island, though grapes continued to be grown and sold in bulk, which was legal. During the Prohibition years the vineyards fell into a state of decline, and the decision was made not to revive that industry. The



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

Company schooner *Santa Cruz*, one of the Company assets, although modified, continued to provide transportation for workers, supplies and cargo until December 6, 1960 when she was totally destroyed at Prisoners' Harbor in a severe northeaster. She was a wooden ship. The only things salvaged were the compass, motor, lead ballast, and a few metal parts.

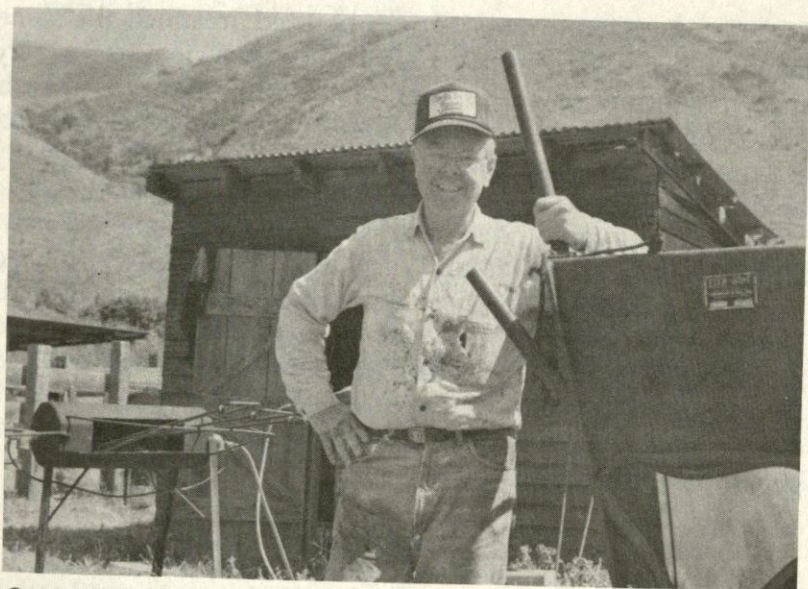


*Edwin and Evelyn Stanton riding on Santa Cruz Island, 1938.  
(Santa Cruz Island Foundation collection)*

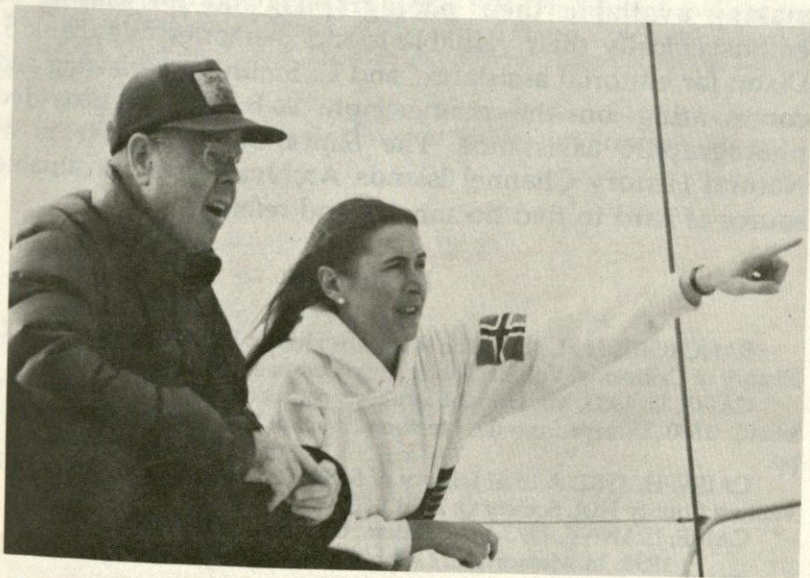
Edwin Stanton's son, Carey, was barely a teenager at the time of his father's 1937 purchase. Thus, he had the unique opportunity of spending school vacations and as much other time as possible on their 55,000 acre island ranch. After being graduated from Stanford University, and then Stanford University School of Medicine and working in internal medicine and pathology for about ten years, Carey Stanton returned to live and work on Santa Cruz Island on April 10, 1957, exactly twenty years to the day after his father acquired the island (Stanton 1984). Edwin Stanton died in 1963, and management of the Santa Cruz Island Company passed to his son.



*Santa Cruz Island: Spanish Period to the Present*



*Carey Stanton at roundup time, Campo del Norte, Santa Cruz Island, Spring, 1983.  
(Santa Cruz Island Foundation collection)*



*Carey Stanton and Marla Daily cruising the shores of Santa Cruz Island  
New Years Day, 1987.  
(Photograph by Jay Carroll)*



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

The island continues to be operated in much the same manner as a 19th century California ranch. It offers a very special window into the past, with 20th century emphasis placed on preservation, restoration of historic structures, and ecology. By the year 2008, the Santa Cruz Island Company holdings will pass to a non-profit, private organization, The Nature Conservancy, dedicated to land preservation. Today, all of Santa Cruz Island remains a privately owned in-holding within the boundaries of the Channel Islands National Park. With the east end of Santa Cruz Island becoming a part of the Channel Islands National Park, and the western 9/10ths of the island slated for The Nature Conservancy, her future is secure, protected for future generations to come.

### Acknowledgments

The authors wish to express particular gratitude to the late Justinian Caire II and his wife, the late Marcia Caire, for making available their photographs, and for sharing so enthusiastically their valuable island memories. We thank S. Dixon for editorial assistance, and C. Smith for reviewing and commenting on the manuscript. W.B. Dewey provided photographic assistance. The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Channel Islands Archive was an invaluable source of hard to find documents and references.

### References

- BANCROFT, H.H. 1885. The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft. Vol. XX. History of California. Vol. III. The History Company, San Francisco, 792 pp.
- CAIRE, D. 1933. Ms. Unpubl. Author's collection. First visit to Santa Cruz Island. 1880. Excerpt from the Memoirs (1933) of Delphine Adelaide Caire, 6 pp.
- CAIRE, H. 1982. A Brief History of Santa Cruz Island from 1869 to 1937. Ventura County Hist. Society Q. 27(4):1-33.
- CAIRE, JEANNE. 1973-1976. Letters. Unpubl. Author's collection.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1950. In Memorium. Delphine A. Caire. Calif. Hist. Society Q. 29(1):81-83.
- CAIRE, JUSTINIAN II. 1980. Taped interview. Unpubl. Author's collection.

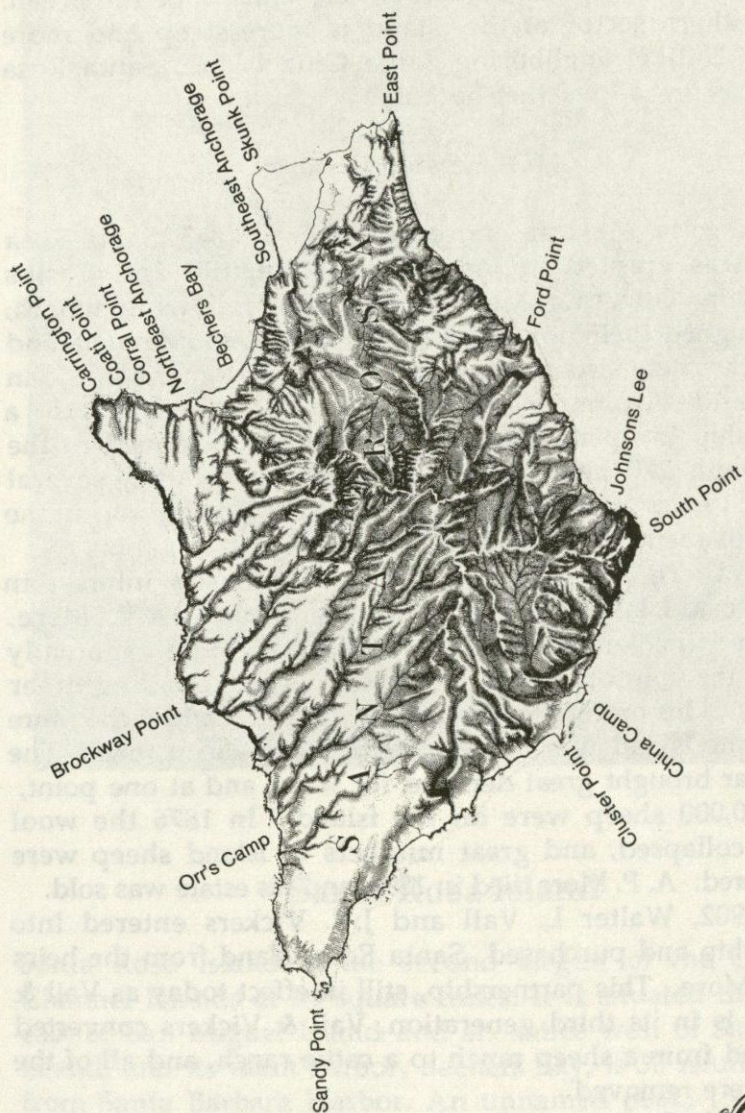


*Santa Cruz Island: Spanish Period to the Present*

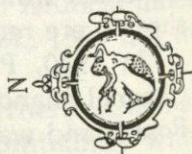
- DAILY, M., and C. STANTON. 1983. Historical Highlights of Santa Cruz Island. *La Reata, Santa Barbara Corral of the Westerners*, 5:14-19.
- ENGELHART, Z. 1923. Santa Barbara Mission. James Barry, S.F. xviii + 470 pp.
- JOHNSON, J. 1982. An Ethnohistoric Study of the Island Chumash. Unpubl. Masters thesis, Univ. Calif., S.B., 235 pp.
- NEWMARK, M.H., and M.R. NEWMARK, eds. 1930. Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913, containing the reminiscences of Harris Newmark. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 744 pp.
- ORD, A. 1956. Occurences in Hispanic California. *Academy of American Franciscan History*, Washington, D.C., 98 pp.
- SANTA BARBARA COUNTY. 1852. Deed Book A:72-73. Copy on file, S.B. Museum of Natural History, Channel Islands Archive.
- SANTA CRUZ ISLAND COMPANY. 1884-1987. Ranch records. Unpubl., Santa Cruz Island Company.
- STANTON, C. 1984. An Island Memoir. With a Select Bibliography by Marla Daily. Zamorano Club, Los Angeles, Calif., 38 pp.
- STENZEL, F. 1975. James Madison Alden, Yankee Artist of the Pacific Coast 1854-1860. Amon Carter Museum, Ft. Worth, Texas, 209 pp.
- SYMME AND ASSOCIATES. 1922. Report on Santa Cruz Island, Santa Barbara County, California. Symmes and Assoc., San Francisco, Calif., 93 pp.
- TAPIS, F. 1805. Letter. Unpubl. Copy on file, S.B. Museum of Natural History, Channel Islands Archive.
- THOMPSON, T.A. and A.A. WEST. 1883. History of Santa Barbara County, California. Thompson and West, Oakland, Calif. 477 pp.
- UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT. 1857. Proceedings in Case No. 176, Andres Castillero, Claimant vs. The United States, Defendant. Island of Santa Cruz. Copy on file, S.B. Museum of Natural History, Channel Islands Archive.
- WAGNER, H.R. Spanish Voyages to the Northwest Coast of America in the Sixteenth Century. California Historical Society, San Francisco, 571 pp.



# Santa Cruz Island Foundation



SANTA ROSA ISLAND





## AN ISLANDIAN ON THE ISLANDS

by Austin T. Wright

With an Introduction by Lawrence Clark Powell

*The following article is reprinted from The Southern California Quarterly, March 1963, Volume XLV, Number 1. It includes a letter written in 1930 by Austin Tappan Wright to his brother, John. Noted California historian, Lawrence Clark Powell, introduces Wright's unique Santa Rosa Island Field Report.*

### Introduction

Lying off the Southern California coast, mostly within sight and stretching from San Diego to Santa Barbara, is a chain of islands. They were discovered in 1542 by João Rodrigues Cabrilho, the Portuguese navigator, better known by the Spanish version of his name—Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo. San Miguel, the northwesternmost of the islands, is his grave, although the exact site of it has never been found.

Because the islands have been privately owned, with some of them latterly becoming Navy property, and because they lack harbors and the exposed coastal waters do not favor pleasure craft, the islands are *terra incognita* to the mainlanders. The exception is Santa Catalina, owned in our time by the Wrigley chewing-gum magnates, whose harbor settlement of Avalon has been developed as a resort, served by steamer from the port of Los Angeles.

There are only two comprehensive books about the islands: *The Channel Islands* by Charles F. Holder (1910) and *The California Islands* by Charles Hillinger (1958). Scientific literature includes botanical, zoological, and anthropological material on some of the islands. The Museum of Natural History in Santa Barbara has pioneered in this work.

A welcome addition to a sparse literature is the present letter, written by Austin Tappan Wright, professor of law in



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

the University of Pennsylvania and formerly in the University of California who was in sabbatical residence at Santa Barbara in the winter of 1930-31, where he was putting the finishing touches on his secret, Utopian novel, *Islandia*, published posthumously in 1942.<sup>1</sup>

Ralph Hoffman, director of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, was Wright's old teacher at Browne and Nichols, the Cambridge preparatory school, at which Austin and his brother John had been educated before going to Harvard, where their father was dean of the graduate school. An ornithologist by training, Hoffmann was also a botanist; and in these twin roles he made many trips to the group of islands directly off Santa Barbara. It was natural for him to include Wright on one of them.

That Wright's letter was written to his brother John, geographer-librarian of the American Geographical Society in New York, accounts for the topographical emphasis. The letter constitutes the fullest such description yet made of Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz. It also beautifully conveys the spirit and feeling of the islands and their relation to the mainland.

A shorter version of Wright's reaction to the trip was written by him for the *Museum Leaflet* (February, 1931), and includes this perceptive paragraph:

"On the mainland we are, so to speak, diffused, and there is too much for us to comprehend, but upon an island the boundaries are definite and apparent and we can understand and know all of it. Our feelings there illustrate the familiar rule, as true of emotion as in mechanics, that limitation increases power. Unless too large or too densely occupied, every island we visit becomes for a time our own kingdom."

Austin Wright's Yankee origin—he was New Hampshire-born—recalls another New England observer on the California coast of a century earlier: Richard Henry Dana, Jr., whose quotidian notes of voyage were transmuted into *Two Years Before the Mast*, a book of prose with few peers in the realm of Californiana.

Neither Austin Wright nor Ralph Hoffmann knew how near they were to their own ends when they made this



*An Islandian on the Islands*

halcyon trip to the islands. Within two years both were dead. Austin Wright was killed in a highway accident near Las Vegas, New Mexico, in September 1931, while driving back to Philadelphia. Ralph Hoffmann fell to his death from a cliff on San Miguel island in July 1932, while climbing for botanical specimens. W. F. Daniell, a Santa Barbara friend, who was present on this trip described by Wright, also accompanied Ralph Hoffmann on his last fatal expedition to San Miguel. Daniell too is now dead.

Still living is the indomitable Lester Rowntree, so vividly described by Wright, now in her 80's and still collecting in the field, lecturing, and writing. Unfortunately, she retained no impression of this particular trip to the islands in 1930.

The original of the letter was given to the UCLA Library by John K. Wright, and it is printed with his permission and that of Sylvia Wright Mitasachi, Austin's daughter and literary executrix. The only omissions are the initial and penultimate paragraphs, which convey family greetings, etc., and a few topographical sketches.

-----  
116 East Padre Street  
Santa Barbara  
December 9, 1930

Dear Jack,

I have had some geographical experiences which may interest you and I shall tell you all about them, and this Report can go to you in lieu of a tangible present to yourself, which otherwise would take the form of a book, as this is.

Last Friday at 3:45 A.M., Margot drove me through the moonlit and empty streets of Santa Barbara to Stearn's Wharf, equipped with duffel bag and bedding. On the wharf we met Ralph Hoffmann, a man named Daniell, who has sailed to the China seas before the mast and tramped the Canadian woods, and a little English woman, Mrs. Rowntree, who gathers seeds from all over Calif. and sends them everywhere.



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

They were all similarly equipped. There was a light w. wind blowing. It was a little hazy, the moon declining but still bright, the east black, and a moderate swell rolling in. We stowed our supplies in the hold of the *Ruby A*, battened down the hatch and made ourselves comfortable on her afterdeck with rugs and blankets, and at about 4:30 A.M. set out for Santa Rosa Island.

Take a look at a map.

The *Ruby A* is 32 feet long, rather narrow, but heavily built, and being light she was a little lively. I imagine the Santa Barbara Channel is never wholly quiet. So we corkscrewed along, seeing Venus rise out of the Malibu Mountains (west end of the St. Monica range) before the east showed any signs of light. The moon sank lower into a smoking haze. The east took light gradually. The broken skyline of Santa Cruz began to appear faintly. The Santa Ynez Range behind Santa Barbara paled. Gulls began to show black against the sky flying somewhere with a purpose. There was what others declared was a desert sunrise, a cold orange band of haze to the eastward with a pale robins egg sky above it, —and the sun, when first coming up, was a rather cold orange ball. There were belts of haze on the water and a thin fog coming up over Santa Cruz, at one time completely hiding it, and then revealing the tops of the high points which are a little over 2,000 feet. We passed within two or three miles of the west end of the Island, a high squared mesa of black volcanic rock falling abruptly to the sea on three sides with a long low flat projecting point (called "Black Rock," or Frasers Point) lying a mile or so south.

Meanwhile Santa Rosa was in sight ahead with larger simpler land forms and more suave slopes. As we came near it showed itself as having a shore line of vertical cliffs above a beach, with flat land above the cliffs which inland rose more and more steeply to a second region of flat lands, behind which rose in the distance rather gently rounded mountains. All this was of course scored with canyons, altering the simplicity of the general scheme. We were by this time (about 7:30 a.m.) in the channel between the two Islands, heading towards Beeches Bay, on the east side of Santa Rosa facing the



## *An Islandian on the Islands*

west end of Santa Cruz, and Santa Rosa ahead was a pale green above the cliffs with darker (very dark) greens in the canyons and on some of the hills in patches of chaparral.

The channel was rough and choppy with the tide rather than wind, the water very blue. Santa Cruz behind us, more or less under the sun, was hazy and indistinct and looked dark and utterly barren.

The *Ruby A* tied up to a bunch of kelp lying on the surface of clear bluegreen water, and we (Hoffmann, Daniell, Mrs. Rowntree, and I) were put ashore by the Captain in a skiff, landing on a point where a knob of volcanic rock broke the even vertical line of the cliffs (about 50 feet high). Once up on the flatland or lower mesa, one could look along it, here wider, here narrower, always overtopped by the higher mesa, for six or seven miles north and three or four south (to a sand spit). We went south looking for a certain canyon.

Of the four channel islands that parallel the Santa Barbara mainland and that run east and west the two smaller ones at the ends (San Miguel to the west, Anacapa to the east) are uninhabited. Santa Rosa is owned by a company which brings cattle there when the fall rains begin and takes them off in the spring. The cattle come lean from Mexico and when taken off in spring are ready for the slaughter house. The only settlement is three or four miles north of where we landed, and consists only of a few barns, a ranch house, and one or two other houses. The only inhabitants are men who tend the cattle. The only other house on the island, I'm told, is one near the west end,—a shack. There are of course no roads, no motors, and no telegraph or telephone. Landing on the island is not allowed. Hoffmann whom you surely remember at Browne and Nichols is director of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. He is at work on a flora of the four islands that I have mentioned. Our expedition was therefore primarily botanical. Daniell and I were guests. So was Mrs. R. but she was out to gather seeds, also. Hoffmann's particular botanical purpose was to investigate a little plant called *Jepsonia*,—originally identified as a species of saxifrage, having two known forms, *Parryi* and *malvifolia* (mallow leaved). Later, on being studied, it was discovered to be



## Santa Cruz Island Foundation

distinct from the saxifrage and to belong to a genus of which it is the sole member. In the herbaria there are only two or three specimens of *malvifolia*, and very few of *Parryi*. It was known to grow at one place near San Diego, at one place on Santa Cruz, and at one place on Santa Rosa. It was very rare and its habits little known. It was reported as flowering before leafing.

So we were all on the lookout for *Jepsonia malvifolia*.

The place we landed is also famous in another way. As you doubtless know, in California there are many species of pine, some of which exist in woody separated groups of only a few trees each,—dying remnants of once large forests. The most famous of these species is the so-called Torrey Pine which is indigenous only at La Jolla near San Diego and on Santa Rosa near where we landed.

Only two persons have purported to study the Island flora and both studies were long ago. Hoffmann has already found at least one hundred species more than either of these persons ever found. Santa Cruz I. is fairly often visited, of course. Fishermen, hunters, and yachtsmen frequent the coves of both islands, but, Hoffmann says, the number of people who land and go inland on Santa Rosa is very small indeed and the number on Santa Cruz by no means large.

We went up one shallow canyon and came down again and after going about one mile south found a larger one. Meanwhile Mrs. R. had gone off by herself, and Daniell to the top of the ridge. Hoffmann and I found the Torrey Pines, a sturdy strong looking pine with 5 needles, six or eight inches long. Then after quite a long search I had the good fortune to light upon a *Jepsonia malvifolia* in flower. The reason we did not find it sooner was, I think, because we were too low. We found it well up the side of the canyon about 300–400 feet above sea level. It is a plant that grows out of a bulb sending up a wirey stem four to six inches long on which grows in a close cluster five or six small whitish flowers with dark dots. The leaves come up separately and lie flat on the ground and are like the leaves of the *Heuchera* to which *Jepsonia* is related. Hoffmann soon solved the flowering-leaving problem. Evidently the bulb sends up the flower in the fall,



## *An Islandian on the Islands*

but the leaves wait for rain. Therefore sometimes flowers will ripen before leaves come, and sometimes not. We found most *J. malvifolias* with flowers wide open or already ripe, with no leaves in dry places and with fully developed leaves in wetter ones. We found one or two in bud with leaves about to come up, too. After our first discovery, we found many *Jepsonia*, on canyon walls, on open mesas, everywhere in fact except on the floors of canyons or where other vegetation was thick—and never below (say) 300 feet above the sea. We gathered many specimens and now all the great Herbariums in the U.S. will have specimens.

Enough for *Jepsonia*.

We climbed to the top of the upper mesa, and there saw one of the loveliest views I have ever seen. The slope behind us was like this: [sketch]

The upper mesa was perhaps six hundred feet high. Below and behind us were the Torrey Pines growing on the higher steeper canyon slopes.

We looked west six or eight miles to the central peaks of the island. From this central massif ran long curving fingers of rounded ridges with canyons between. The higher mesa on which we were seemed to be of co-equal height with many of these ridges, as though once the island was a table land. The central hills perhaps mark a third level, but erosion is so great in their neighborhood that I can't say so for sure,—nor do I venture to say that the "higher mesa" on which we were marked a plane of table land, and that the original higher eroded plane was not somewhere high above everything. But I do say that this region of forty square miles or so of more or less flat-topped rounded ridges, with the long lines of deep curving canyons running down to the sea and the shorter lines of smaller tributary canyons, with the suave rounded shapes of the central hills, and all, every bit except of a few dark patches of chaparral on one ridge and hill, all of it grassland, a pale lovely light green, with only one "sign of man" in sight—a long fence running straight up hill and down dale for miles, with a few cattle three or four miles away and very minute as the only living things on earth, with a pair of black ravens circling above us and uttering



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

their throaty remote caws, with sand dunes far to the south and below us,—and all of it a pale delicate green,—I do say it was wonderfully spacious and beautiful.

We went on, botanizing. We found Daniell again and the three of us lunched on the top of the ridge. We walked west again and descended into a great canyon which from above we could see running high and long and deep as far as the centre of the island. At the bottom was a flat floor and very green grass, and there was a running brook. We ascended it for a mile or so, and then descended it and finally climbed out of it up a steep hot slope covered with very low patches of scrub oak, cactus, manzanita, up to the top of the higher mesa again.

In this canyon and upon its sides was one of the queerest of the many queer kinds of rock formations that I have seen in this state. Maybe you know all about it, and, if so, can tell me what it is. There would be a surface of gray-coloured, pebble-substanced, coarse-grained rock. In places this surface was gone, and where it was gone, the inner rock material would be rounded out in hollows and holes, sometimes hemispherical with the outer rock a projecting lip all around, sometimes in deep lenses and the inner rock was much lighter in colour, buff coloured, and its surface was in smoother curves, and it disintegrated into coarse sands. sometimes a projecting mass of this rock had so many holes opening into each other that it was like a sponge, but much less regular than a sponge is, turned into stone.

Having reached the higher mesa again we started towards the ranch house four or five miles away. For a while we went separate ways, Daniell ahead, Hoffmann in a canyon, I on the ridge watching Hoffmann several hundred feet below. At about four we reached the ranch and went through its high fenced corrals and came out near the sea.

The Captain had brought our stuff ashore, and we made camp in a low and rather dense line of eucalyptus trees, near the cliff edge. We ate supper in the dark out of cans, Hoffmann and I went to the ranch house in the full moonlight to put his specimens in a press, and talked with the cook and superintendent, who live there in primitive



## An Islandian on the Islands

style, and then about 7 he turned in. I walked on the cliffs till about 8, and then slept under eucalyptus branches, which rattled in a strong west wind, blankets over my head to shut out the very bright, liquid, silvery moonlight.

Next morning the four of us were off before sunrise to climb Black Mountain, a part but not the highest part of the central massif, still looking for *Jepsonia* and also to gather acorns from *Quercus tomentella*, which (if I remember) grows only on the Islands like several other species of things and also to see the Bishop Pines, which are almost as isolated in their groupings as the Torrey Pines. When upon the higher mesa we saw the sun rise over arid-looking Santa Cruz. We left the grassland as we ascended and walked through a mile or two of chaparral, but of a very low growing sort so that there was never any pushing through it, but always a way round on the reddish friable rock. The chaparral consisted principally of evergreen scrub oaks, cactus, and the manzanita, all dwarfed. Why there was no grass here seemed to be due mainly to exposure and partly to soil. The ridge we were climbing was certainly an open one and many of the clumps of chaparral were fighting a losing fight. There were low, mounded, dark green clumps of dwarfed shrubs with the bare reddish-yellow gravel between, and yet here and there, in pockets of this moor-like region of high slopes, were little pocketlike depressions of vivid green grass,—and of course in the distance were always the rounded ridges of the grasslands.

Beyond the chaparral was grass again, at perhaps 1000 feet. We were on Black Mtn. which is the northern buttress of the central massif. Here within a circle of perhaps a quarter mile in diameter were the heads of canyons running down to the north and eastern sides of the island, and within half a mile, another, perhaps the longest of all, ran southeast and opened on the sea south of the easternmost point of the Island. On the northern face of Black Mtn. there are four or five steep canyons all parallel with each other and only a hundred yards or so apart at their heads. They all run downward northerly and then the westernmost one of them curves easterly and with a higher ridge on its western and north western side



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

gathers in, so to speak, all the others.

I went down into No. 2 (from the east) to a group of Bishop Pines and it was quite a pull down and back, and returned with the cones and branches Hoffmann wanted, while Daniell photographed them for him. At this point they were truly making a last stand fight.

Just below the summit of Black Mtn. (\*which according to the Coast Survey Chart is about 1250 feet as I remember) is a fine and vigorous grove of *Quercus tomentella*. It is a splendid live oak with very dark and rather large sized leaves of typical live oak shape. It fruits, so they say, biennially. We found it covered with large acorns, shaped like this (life size): [sketch] and sometimes longer and thinner.

Mrs. Rowntree, who can't be five feet, went into the grove and knocked down acorns with a long stick. She was an odd little figure, in sneakers, tan wool stockings, green knickerbockers, white turtle neck sweater almost hiding her head and brown beret pulled very low over her small sunburned, red cheeked face.

Two noble, well known, and very wealthy Englishmen are each making a collection of rare trees. Each has separately asked her to get acorns from this (and other) trees. Neither knows of the other's request. They try to outvie each other in their novelties. She was amused at the idea that acorns which each thought he alone was getting would come from a common collection.

We ate lunch (at about 11) on the edge of the grove and then started down canyon No. 3 (from the east), and after descending three or four hundred feet we side-wound upon the ridge between it and No. 2. The canyon to the east (of No. 2 and No. 1 which joined further up) was very deep and steep sided. I went to have a look up it, and saw that height up the canyon slope above the grove pines which I had visited and which seemed perishing was only an outline of a much finer group that extended round into canyon No. 1, and which grew in an amphitheater on the eastern wall of No. 1 into really tall and splendid trees.

(It suddenly occurs to me that I am possibly confusing Bishop Pines with the two needle Montereys; and that these



are two needle Montereys. Whichever they are, they are rare!)

Anyway having told Hoffmann about the luxurious look of the canyon, he had to go down into it and I went down with him,—a very steep descent. The canyon was deep, dark, and full of things he was glad to see, with wet patches though no running water. It was also full of boulders, blackberry vines hanging in vertical screens like old fashioned bead curtains, and dry waterfalls. Some of these we went down as one descends alpine chimneys by straddling from side to side. Finally we came to one that we could not descend. We took separate paths back to the ridge again, and I got up all right but had to wriggle on all fours through a grove of manzanita which was a little hard on bare knees (for I wore shorts); but Hoffmann got into a bad place. I waited sometime for him, but finally he also emerged. While waiting I saw Mrs. R. Struggling along far below in the canyon where the ridge footed into it. While I watched her progress with her heavy sack of acorns on her back, unknown to her, Daniell still further down the canyon where it had become flat floored was watching me, unknown to me.

In N.E., if we had been similarly far apart, we would ordinarily have been whilly out of range of each other,—except of course on ledgy places like the top of Goose Eye.<sup>3</sup>

Finally we all assembled where Daniell was. Hoffman arrived last of all, so intent on flora that he would have walked past the human fauna that we were without seeing us, had we not hailed him.

Speaking of fauna, we saw on the mesa the day before a grey fox, and on this day a spotted skunk, and a drove of the wild pigs, the descendant of the domestic pigs said to have been put on the island in Spanish days. It was a strange sight to see a large black pig against the sky scampering down the long, rather steep edge of a chaparral covered ridge. We also saw many ravens, who perhaps followed us overhead, a number of hawks, a bald eagle, and lower down heard and saw meadow larks. And a little below the point of assembling, a heard of three deer (not native but recently imported upon the island) watched us pass.

The canyon we were in opened upon the lower mesa



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

behind the ranch house. While we were passing through one of the corrals, perhaps 300 by 100 yards, a drove of perhaps 100 steers went past us in the charge of 5 or 6 cowboys. They had been landed a few days before and were being driven into the grasslands. It was interesting to see how they were handled, and their tendency to round themselves up into a compact circular herd.

We reached camp at a little after one o'clock and promptly broke camp, and carried our goods to the end of the pier which lies here. Each article had to be lowered at the end of a rope into the skiff, and we ourselves to descend by a ship's ladder. The *Ruby A* was under way after two; headed for Santa Cruz Island.

This island was formerly operated as a single ranch. It was owned by Justinian Caire and is still owned by his descendants, but has been divided into two ranches. Unlike Santa Rosa it has no central massif, but has instead two long parallel ridges with a valley between in which lies the old Caire ranch, and which opens upon the sea at Prisoners' Harbor where the Caires have a pier and a landing place. The Caire ranch runs from 30,000 to 40,000 sheep, has vineyards, gardens, orchards, and is lived at by the Caires during some of the year. It is a permanent settlement with smithy, church, school, etc., and more nearly than any other place in Calif. resembles old Spanish days. All this I learned from Hoffmann. Recently the Caires granted a concession on Pelican Bay and there is now a resort at that place run by one Eaton of S. Barbara, but no one is permitted to land elsewhere except by permission. But the Island is one impossible to police and many persons land in its coves, and often fishermen with a wish for fresh meat kill the sheep.

We crossed the channel to the West End of Santa Cruz. It was slightly overcast and almost calm. A flock of white geese flew over. There were loons on the water and in flight, "sheer water," gulls, and a number of pelicans. We passed close under the dark cliffs of West Point. The rock is volcanic and was dark or reddish. There were miles of cliffs. The whole Island is steeper, rugged, ragged, and more broken than Santa Rosa; and the cliffs showed enormous caverns some of



## *An Islandian on the Islands*

which must be 100 feet high. Indeed often the cliffs have the reverse of a normal sea cliff profile. Instead of having a talus slope cut back into a beach at sea level like this: [sketch] They are like this: [sketch]

Very likely there is a definite benching below sea level, as shown by the dotted line, but it is not apparent, and the only beaches (of pebbles) are in recesses in the shore between cliffs at the mouth of canyons which descend to sea level. And we passed a line of cliffs the upper profile of which showed a series of hanging canyons: [sketch]

The Channel Islands are being anthropologized and botanicized by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. And I believe they are being carefully geologized also, —but you know better than I whether these evidences that I have cited show coastal uplift rather than wave erosion, or whatever is the apt term for it. I vaguely remember that in Davis' book on the Antilles he instanced a shore front like that which I have pictured as indicating something, but I don't remember what. Anyway, the cliffs are as diagrammatic in nature as Davis is on paper. I should think that if once these canyons opened upon the sea there would be traces of beaches and benches in their uplifted seaward mouths. Maybe there are such traces, but they were not visible from a motor boat going rapidly by towards dusk. On the other hand, it is strange that the sea should cut back the cliffs so clearly and so much faster than the canyons cut downward without leaving something beneath the cliffs. By the chart the water is very deep below the face of the cliffs and by the way the motor boat was steered there were no off lying shoals known to the boatman. Very likely somebody has hypothesized upon all this with authority and it is foolish for me to make these amateur speculations *in vacuo*: but Hoffmann has also wondered as I have; a newspaper article on the islands says that the shelf on which the islands stood showed depths of 700 fathoms 50 years ago at spots where now there are 30 fathoms; and Hoffmann and I found a grove of ironwoods which usually grows in high canyons in a canyon only 200 or 300 feet above sea level,—evidence (if of anything geologic) rather of rapid subsidence than of



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

uplift.

As I said, we proceeded along under these cliffs passing various harbors or rather open coves giving shelter from westerlies (the prevailing summer wind) and southeasterlies (the rain wind), but of course not from "northers," or "Sant'anas" which are dry hot winds said to have their origin in the desert and which blow from the northeast upon this coast.

The chart names a few of the harbors correctly according to local usage, but incorrectly names several ("Tinkers" is properly Orizaba; "Platt's" is properly Dicks; and "Boat Landing" is Lady's), and leaves unnamed two important ones,—Fry's and Valdez. The latter, which we passed, is curious in that the way one lands there in a westerly is to row into the central one of three caves. In the cave is a bit of beach where you step out. You then walk through a tunnel and come out of the eastern entrance high up on the beach proper, where you could not have landed in the rough weather.

We passed this cove or harbor and the trail which leads thence over the mountains to the ranch house in the interior valley, and then passed Lady's, Diablo Point, and Fry's Harbor, where there is a quarry and a settlement, the stone being used on Santa Barbara's breakwater. We then entered Platt's Harbor so misnamed really Dicks, and made a landing on a shingle beach through a mild surf just at dusk.

This is a canyon harbor, that is a canyon comes down from the hills—in this instance one with steep walls,—and the normal canyon floor or slope reaches sea level before the ends of the ridges that make the canyon walls reach sea level. The detritus washed down from the canyon fills the seaward end for about two hundred yards (the canyon is less than half that size), so that just after landing and crossing the ridge formed by the higher part of the beach, one walks on a flat, so to speak, but the flat has not yet extended itself to the end of the canyon. The beach therefore is withdrawn from the seaward end of the canyon so that the beach is more or less protected.

We hustled our things ashore, carried them across the flat and through the muddy bed of the canyon brook, which bed



## *An Islandian on the Islands*

had trenched itself in the flat, leaving a flat shelf between it and the canyon wall. On this shelf, at a place where the canyon wall was under cut in a cave about ten feet high, thirty feet long, and fifteen feet deep, we made camp and by wasting little time managed to get a meal before dark at (say) 5:15 p.m.

It was a romantic spot. In places the canyon walls were vertical. The canyon faced slantwise to the more or less east and west coast, looking northeastward towards Ventura. Southwest one looked straight up the canyon to Mt. Diablo or one of its spurs, the highest point on Santa Cruz. Just when it was darkest the moon rose at the very mouth of the canyon. The mountains back of Ventura appeared against it only to be burned away in the diffused moonlight as the moon climbed a little higher. And as the moon ascended in the plane of the elliptic it exactly paralleled the slope of the canyon wall.

Am I not right in saying, as I argued to Hoffmann and Daniell, that the winter *full* moon rises about where the summer sun rises and goes much nearer the zenith than the winter sun does? That as the moon wanes it rises further and further south until at the time of the new moon it is rising about where the sun does? That when the moon begins to wax again, its risings work north again? That its extreme north point of rising occurs at the nearest full moon to Dec. 21st? That at the spring and fall equinoxes moon and sun rise and set at the same point? And that in summer it is the sun that rises north of the moon's point of rising?—This is nine tenths deduction and one tenth observation. But though the moon's orbit is a little off the plane of the elliptic (or otherwise it would be continually occulting the planets), it is not much off; and of course the plane of the elliptic is at its lowest below the celestial equator at midnight June 21st and at its highest above that equator at midnight December 21st; and the planets ride high in winter and low in summer. This last is observation. And otherwise could one see Canopus, as one does here in winter, if the signs of the Zodiac were not all higher in the sky?

I don't know that I persuaded them. Daniell had an idea for a while that the moon after rising took a short cut from northeast to northwest, but gave that up when its silvering



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

ball went rolling up the black seaward slope of the canyon. Mrs. R. went across the canyon to an exactly similar cave on its northwest wall. We chatted for a while around a fire at the cave end. Then D. went to bed in the cave, and Hoffmann out in the moonlight; and I took a stroll and finally turned in, sleeping with my head in the cave and my feet out, and the rim of the cave edged with twigs and leaves against moon and sky.

And in the night I felt the wind drop and shift from down canyon to up canyon and the surf grow louder and louder.

In the morning it was clear as crystal and a Santa Ana or "norther" was blowing fresh. The *Ruby A* was dancing about outside. We got up before sunrise and cooked eggs and bacon in the semidark and discussed weather for a while. Now the Sant'ana is supposed either to stop at noon or else to blow for three days. We were therefore faced with the prospect of (1) leaving that day if it dropped (2) staying in the canyon for three days (3) walking some 15 miles to China Harbor in the east end of the island and taking the boat from there, if the boatman was willing to venture out upon the Channel, as was unlikely,—in which case we would have to abandon our camp outfits, specimens, etc.

So Hoffmann and I went for a walk at about 6:30 a.m. looking primarily for *Jepsonia* again, which had been seen at Lady's Harbor or Valdez (I forget which) by him but not elsewhere and which had been reported on the island in the 80s (then being considered a species of Saxifrage). We climbed at 45° slope out of the canyon and as we did so the sun began to light the upper slopes. Santa Cruz, seen near to in daylight for the first time, showed less green than Santa Rosa, but this was because its slopes though steeper were more deeply covered with last year's dry, yellow, oat and grass straw which masked the green. On the sheep trails, however, where this straw had been trampled down, this year's new green showed clearly, and there was a curious effect, the reverse of the usual, of yellow slopes and green trails; and in among and as background to all this were outcrops of yellow and orange and red rocks and ledges, and the dark deep evergreen green of live oaks and manzanitas, the maroon crimson of manzanita



## *An Islandian on the Islands*

trunks, the windy blue and white of the sea, a bright sun, a blue sky. Santa Rosa was a pale, spacious, and beautiful; Santa Cruz brilliant, glen like, colorful, and beautiful.

We looked for *Jepsonia* and found none, but we climbed to the ridge out of the canyon into the clear sun, and saw the wide world, the coast of Santa Cruz clear to the east end, which looked wild and barren, the red ragged tips of the backbone of the island, a stretch of downland, tawny yellow and as soft as a cat's fur, sharp against the blue sea, and miles and miles and miles of the windy whitecapped Channel, and across that the Santa Barbara coast, the white gleam of a few buildings 23 sea miles away, and the Santa Ynez Range, which overhands that city, itself overlapped by the 6000-8000 foot peaks in the unsettled back country. It was a grand view, and if we did not find *Jepsonia*, we did find Ironwoods growing nearer to the sea than Hoffmann had ever known them to grow and some very odd manzanitas, not shrubs but really trees, and also the Bishop Pine and the two needle Monterey Pine growing all together, and we saw other plants which pleased him very much. After 5 hours of side winding and upping and downing we came back to camp. The boatman had come ashore. The *Ruby A* had dragged badly. The wind had risen, and he wanted to get out. There was no getting us off or rather our stuff, but he managed to get to sea in the landing skiff with Daniell and aboard his boat and they set out for China Harbor, spray breaking over the cabin.

The surf came into the space between the two canyon walls in sliding sheets that struck the west wall and piled up there in a high dash of foam and green and that slid off sideways across the opening to pile up on the east wall before drawing out again. We decided that since the wind had not abated at 12, we were fated to stay another day or so.

Therefore Hoffmann and I set out again, this time up the canyon. The stream is perennial, and it was an unusual experience to me in California. The slopes bore cactus, but in the bottom of the canyon were ferns, *Woodwardia* five feet high, and several kinds of maiden hair, lush sedges, and *Heucheras*, etc. The bed was sometimes too steep and we climbed upon the slopes and finally I left Hoffmann to his



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

canyon trail and myself paralleled his course on the steep open slopes about 50 to 2100 feet above him, going of course much faster than he, though going further because my movement was unhampered by boulders and vegetation. So I would go along until I knew I was ahead of him and choose a point where I could look down into the canyon and wait till I saw him coming, meanwhile enjoying the sun. Then when he appeared I would hail him and go on again.

We thus proceeded working up to about 1000 feet and coming together at a point where his canyon rose up so steeply that I ran into it.

And he had found *Jepsonia*, growing almost rankly,—and a bulrush.

We returned, both on the slopes, and found the "Santa Ana," not laying true to form, had dropped to a breath. So we made ready to depart, and I had a swim while two sea lions cruised about, perhaps 150 feet away. The water was like Maine, but not too cold.

The *Ruby A* reappeared. The surf made embarking exciting and I had to wade, but we got off successfully, and crossed the Channel leaving at 4:45 p.m. at an hour when the pelicans were working overtime, flying like terns.

At 7:45 we reached Stearn's Wharf, and one of the most interesting and beautiful trips I have ever had was over.

And now closing the longest letter I have ever written and written, too, all in one day, I wish all of you and Aunt Dutchie a Merry Christmas.

With love from us all

Austin

### Notes

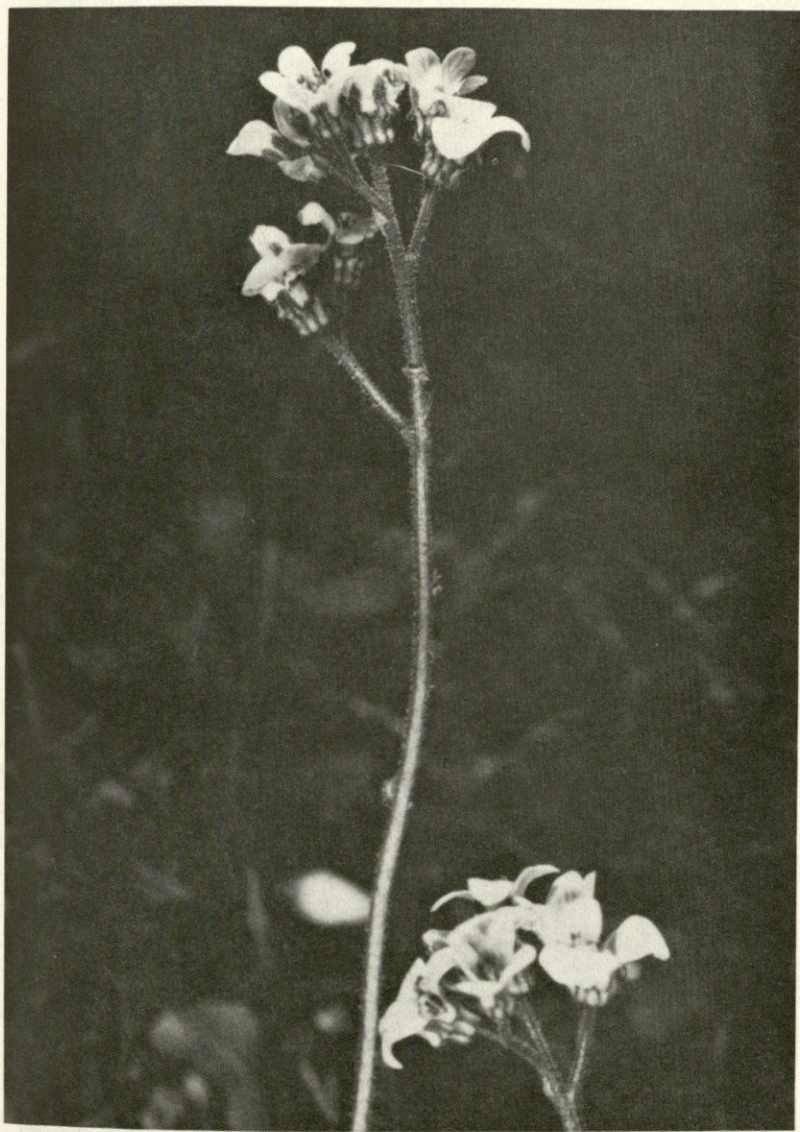
1. With an introduction by Leonard Bacon; republished in 1958, with an introduction by Sylvia Wright. Cf. also *An Introduction to Islandia* by Basil Davenport, 1942 and "All That Is Poetic in Life" in *A Passion for Books* by Lawrence Clark Powell, 1959.

2. Except for this letter of especial Southern California interest, Austin Wright's papers have been deposited by his daughter and brother in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

3. A sharp peak in the northerly White Mountains of Maine. [Ed.]



*An Islandian on the Islands*



*Jepsonia malvifolia* is found on Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz Islands as well as on Guadalupe Island, Mexico. Ralph Hoffmann was successful in his quest for this plant on his trip with author, Austin T. Wright.

(Photograph by Steve Junak)



*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*



*Torrey Pines on Santa Rosa Island with Santa Cruz Island on the horizon.*  
(Photograph by William B. Dewey)



## SANTA ROSA ISLAND

By Dr. Perry G. M. Austin

*The following article first appeared in the Fall, 1959 issue of Santa Barbara Historical Society's Noticias.*

**Perry Gwynne More Austin (1888-1960)** was a member of the large More family whose members owned interests in Santa Rosa Island from 1859-1902. His great uncle was A.P. More, eventual owner of all of Santa Rosa Island.

In the late nineties in Santa Barbara, I grew up in the More family, who owned Santa Rosa Island. My mother was a More and many years of her childhood were spent in the simple, New England style, white ranch house at Bechers Bay. Across the Santa Barbara Channel was More's Landing, a regular stop for coast-wise steamships—before the days of the railroad. It was one outlet for shipping of cattle and grains and the abundant walnut crop which for years was the wealth of Goleta Valley. Many tons of asphaltum, also, were shipped from this landing. There was always a close connection between this More ranch on the mainland and the island ranch of Santa Rosa. It was to More's Landing in Goleta that sheep and cattle were shipped from the Island in the trim schooner *Santa Rosa*. One of my prize possessions is a large painting of this once familiar ship done by its well known captain, A. B. Thompson.

Among my most cherished memories are the stories my mother would tell of her life on the island. In the brilliant moonlight she sometimes would look out on a bleak landscape dotted with great white sand dunes—a lonely place for an imaginative girl. The next morning, perhaps, she would look out—and the sand dunes were gone. It was the



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

ever present winds that had picked them up and placed them in another, far distant spot! Another world it was—and, oh, so lonely!

But this island life provided many diversions. Little gray foxes would scamper into the prevalent underbrush of holly, scrub oak, and the abundant ironwood. And there were wild flowers everywhere.

In the little white school house at Bechers Bay, my mother and her brothers, with children of the sheepherders, went to school. The Mores imported a school teacher from their ancestral home in Ohio to be guide, philosopher, and friend for the children on the Island. I well remember her as an old lady, this kindly soul, Mrs. Isabel, reputed to be the first white teacher in an American school in Santa Barbara County.

Sheep shearing time was, of course, the high point of the year. To this day, I vividly remember the stream of Chinese and Mexicans who came to our back door in Santa Barbara seeking my grandfather, John F. More,<sup>1</sup> to be hired for another season of sheep shearing on the Island. The Chinamen always would come bearing gifts of abalone pearls, choice silks from China, and, for the children of the family, lichee nuts, candied coconut, and tasty, preserved ginger in artistic octagonal green jars much treasured by Santa Barbarans of that era. Once hired, they sailed across the Channel for the important weeks of shearing of thousands of white woolled sheep for the markets of the world.

For the "Spaniards", the grand finale was always a kind of fiesta, mostly dancing in the shearing barns that were swept clean, with polished floors and gay decorations. To the music of guitars and a piano they celebrated the end of another strenuous season of labor with its neatly stored harvest of precious wool. As a reward for work well done, there was a period of hunting, as there were on the Island many wild boar with their prized ivory tusks, the little gray foxes, and tender little deer peculiar to the Channel Islands.<sup>2</sup>

It is a rather wild coast on Santa Rosa, with only two good harbors; and again, it is an island known for its many massive sand dunes. The almost continuous winds wrecked scores of



## Santa Rosa Island

vessels on its rocky shores and cliffs. For years we had in the family a great brass ship's bell bearing the name *The Crown of England*—a reminder of one of the many casualties in the rough seas that harassed the Island.

The early history of this Channel Island reveals a primitive people known to us as Canaliño Indians. The Natural History Museum in Santa Barbara contains a wing displaying a rare collection of artifacts, many of them taken from Santa Rosa Island, and graphic representations of the mud and straw dwellings of these ancient, primitive people. They were the earliest tribes in this region to develop a community life with a kind of central government and tribal center. When the Spaniards came into the scene in California, Santa Rosa Island was given by Governor Micheltorena, in 1834, to members of one of the ruling families in Santa Barbara—Don Carlos and Don Jose Carrillo. A royal gift it was, a wooded island fifteen miles long and ten miles wide, with a mountainous terrain rising to a height of 1,589 feet, visible for forty miles. It subsequently was purchased by the More Brothers, who introduced cattle and race horse stock in addition to the traditional sheep. The Island was bought by Vail & Vickers Company of San Francisco in 1902, and they are still its owners, grazing some of the finest cattle to be found in the West.

Recent archaeological excavations on the Island, by the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, have revealed perhaps the earliest dated evidence of man's existence on the Western Hemisphere. Buried dwarf mammoth bones gave evidence of being pulled apart in such a way that the scientists concluded they had been barbecued and eaten by humans on Santa Rosa Island 29,650 years ago!

Today, there is a persistent dream that not only Santa Rosa, but all the Santa Barbara Channel Islands, may one day become a state or national park—forever the treasure of the whole American people. May this dream become a reality. <sup>3</sup>



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

### *Notes*

1. John F. More was the younger brother of A.P. More, eventual owner of all of Santa Rosa Island.
2. There are no deer "peculiar to the Channel Islands." Deer on Santa Rosa Island were introduced.
3. Santa Rosa Island became a part of Channel Islands National Park in 1987.

-editor



*Two wooden barns on Santa Rosa Island date back to the More era.  
(Photograph by William B. Dewey)*



## **SANTA ROSA ISLAND: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE**

**By Al Vail and Marla Daily**

*The following article was presented by Al Vail on March 2, 1987 at the Third California Islands Symposium held at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. It is published here for the first time.*

**Al Vail** is a third generation family rancher on Santa Rosa Island. His grandfather, Walter L. Vail, and J.V. Vickers entered into partnership in 1902 and purchased the island from the heirs of A.P. More. In December of 1986, the National Park Service purchased Santa Rosa Island from Vail & Vickers for inclusion within Channel Islands National Park.

### **Abstract**

Santa Rosa Island, approximately eight-four square miles in size, is the second largest of the California Channel Islands. An 1843 Mexican land grant established this island's private status. Since 1902, Vail & Vickers has run a cattle ranch on the island, which is now in its fourth generation of family management. As mandated by President Carter in 1980, Santa Rosa Island was purchased (December, 1986) by the Government for inclusion within the Channel Islands National Park.

### **Introduction**

1987 marks the end of an era on Santa Rosa Island, and the beginning of a new future. From prehistoric and historic Indian occupation, followed by 19th century sheep ranching,



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

to 20th century cattle grazing, Santa Rosa Island now looks forward to a future of public visitation offering hiking and camping opportunities. Park Service management emphasis on preservation, protection, and interpretation of the island's widespread cultural and biological resources will be facilitated by the remarkable care the island has received since the turn of the century under Vail & Vickers ownership.

### **The Early Years**

Santa Rosa Island's past saw mammoths and man long before history was recorded. Although archaeologists offer dates varying from 40,000 years ago (Berger 1980) to 8,700 years ago (Morris 1987) for early presence of man on Santa Rosa Island, we do know that Chumash Indians and their predecessors lived on Santa Rosa Island for thousands of years before anyone ever wrote about it. Historians generally agree, however, that the 1542 expedition of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo was the first to note the northern Channel Islands. It has even been hypothesized that Cabrillo himself may have been buried on Santa Rosa Island (Heizer 1972).

Sebastian Rodríguez Cermeño paused at Santa Rosa Island in 1595 where he obtained "eighteen fish and a seal" from the Indians in exchange for "some pieces of taffeta and a cotton cloth" (Holland 1962). The names of the California Channel Islands during the early European exploration years were often changed and interchanged back and forth until English explorer George Vancouver listed the names on his admiralty charts in the early 1770s. From then on, the name Santa Rosa Island was universally accepted.

During these early explorative centuries, sea lions, seals and sea otters were plentiful around Santa Rosa Island. By the late 1700s and continuing into the mid 1800s, British, Russian and American trading vessels were operating off the coast of California, hiring Alaskan Aleuts and Hawaiian Kanakan hunters to help compete in the slaughter of these animals. Aleuts in particular were known for their viciousness and ferocity. In the mid 1830s and continuing through 1841, Captain George Nidever, hunter and trader, made his winter



## *Santa Rosa Island: Past, Present and Future*

headquarters on Santa Rosa Island. From here, he plied waters and shores of the Channel Islands in search of the rapidly depleting sea otters, highly valued for their fur pelts. In January 10, 1836, Nidever recounted a particularly gruesome fight he had with Aleuts "on the head of Santa Rosa Island" in which several people were killed (Ellison 1937). The last few years Nidever was using Santa Rosa Island as his base of operations as a squatter, plans were underway which were to shape things to come for Santa Rosa Island. Today, the cave in which Nidever stored his camp supplies can be found in Ranch House Canyon behind the bunkhouse, although now it is almost entirely filled with silt.

### **The Carrillo Years: 1843—1859**

In January 1839, an order was issued authorizing the granting of Santa Rosa Island to Don Carlos and Don Jose Antonio Carrillo for their patriotic services to Mexico. Unfortunately for them, however, their political rival Juan Bautista Alvarado had just been made Governor of California, and he spitefully was able to deny their petition. Instead, on November 1, 1841, Santa Rosa Island was granted by Alvarado to one of his friends and supporters, Jose Castro. In 1842, Manuel Micheltorena became governor, and the Carrillo brothers petitioned Micheltorena for the island, pointing out the original order from Mexico and their personal problems with ex-governor Alvarado. Micheltorena was able to amicably settle the problem, and the Carrillos agreed to pay Castro \$2000. On October 4, 1843, Santa Rosa Island became the property of brothers Carlos and Jose Antonio Carrillo. Less than a month later, on November 2, 1843, they in turn sold the island to Manuela and Francisca Carrillo, daughters of Carlos. The sum paid was reported to be \$3300, "one-half in silver money of good quality and the other half in goods" (Holland 1962). That works out to about 5 cents an acre for the island's 62,696 acres.

Manuela Carrillo married American John Coffin Jones, and her sister married American Alpheus Basilio Thompson. Their respective husbands, who had been in previous business



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

ventures together, entered into a partnership to occupy and operate Santa Rosa Island. Thompson took initiative, and in September of 1844, he shipped 270 head of his father-in-laws' cattle to the island, along with a later shipment that year of nine horses, two rams and 51 ewes. The first known island house, built by Thompson, was a 24 foot long, 15 foot wide plank house with one door, one glass window, and a shingle roof. A larger ranch house was built some time prior to 1855, although neither house is standing today.

According to law, Mexican land grants issued prior to California's statehood had to be approved by the newly created United States Land Commission. On March 23, 1852, the Carrillos' claim to Santa Rosa Island was submitted and subsequently denied. They appealed the verdict to the District Court, and on January 18, 1856, the Land Commission's decision was overruled and the Carrillo title was affirmed. During these legally frustrating years, island sheep and cattle ranching continued to flourish while the Jones-Thompson partnership did not. As Thompson continued to develop Santa Rosa Island affairs, Jones moved to Massachusetts, appointing Santa Barbara friend Alfred Robinson as his agent in the bitter legal battles which were to ensue between the former partners.

### **The More Years: 1858-1901**

October 6, 1858, "in front of the door of the court house of the County of Santa Barbara" a portion of Alpheus Thompson's half-interest in Santa Rosa Island was sold at auction as a result of a judgement against Thompson brought on by a debtor. The More family tenure on Santa Rosa Island began with T. Wallace More's \$3000 auction purchase of this partial interest in Santa Rosa Island (S.B. County 1859) which he later (1867) traded to his brother Alexander P. More for property elsewhere (S.B. County 1867).

John Jones died in 1861 in Massachusetts, leaving his half-share in Santa Rosa Island to his wife and two children. On February 5, 1865, they sold the Jones' interest to Alexander P. More for \$18,000 (S.B. County 1865).



## *Santa Rosa Island: Past, Present and Future*

Thompson died in 1869, after which Alexander P. More purchased the remaining Thompson interest in Santa Rosa Island from several of Thompson's children (S.B. County 1869a, 1869b, 1870a, 1870b). A month after these purchases, he took on More brother Henry as his partner in the island venture. By 1881, A.P. was able to buy out Henry, becoming the sole owner of Santa Rosa Island (S.B. County 1881) until his death in 1893.

During the More tenure on Santa Rosa Island, the island was used principally as a sheep ranch. The Civil War brought with it a great demand for wool used in the manufacture of soldiers' uniforms, and the Santa Rose Island venture prospered. In 1874, 300,000 pounds of wool was produced. This surge in the market was followed by its collapse in 1876, at which time sheep "matanzas" or slaughters were held on the island to minimize losses.

A.P. More, bachelor and one of twelve More children, was known for his bad temper. In 1886, he caught one of his Chinese cooks attempting to stow away on a boat headed for the mainland. In a fit of rage, More shot and killed the Chinaman. Manslaughter charges were brought against him, and he was convicted. The Appellate Court reversed the decision, however, since there was a jurisdictional problem—this because the cook was shot on a pier over water and the court could not decide just who actually held jurisdiction in this case, local, State or Federal court. A. P. More went free.

### **Vail & Vickers: 1901—1986**

A. P. More died in 1893 with no family of his own, leaving his estate to various siblings and their children. John More, youngest of the More brothers, handled the estate until 1894 when he was found guilty of stealing \$80,000. A. P. More's many heirs sold and traded their partial interests in Santa Rosa Island, and in July of 1901 Walter L. Vail and J.V. Vickers, began buying up these More heirs' interests (S.B. County 1901), some in increments as small as one twelfth or one twenty-fourth. Under the name of Vail & Vickers, these



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*



*Vail & Vickers ranch on Santa Rosa Island.*

*(Photograph by William B. Dewey)*

two men, Los Angeles partners in the cattle business, changed island ranching operations from sheep to cattle. The island had been badly overgrazed by sheep, so they began by stocking the cattle lightly for a number of years, thus allowing the grasslands to recover. Cattle were brought to the island as a "stocker" operation—one which fattens young animals for the market as opposed to one which breeds them.

Walter L. Vail died in 1907, leaving his share of the island to his wife, Margaret, and their seven children: Nathan R., Walter, Mary E., W. Banning, Mahlon, Edward N., and Margaret. J. V. Vickers died in 1914, leaving his share of the island to his wife and four daughters: Florence, Ann, Clara and Dora. Until the end of 1986, various Vail and Vickers heirs have held title to and/or run the families' island operations.

The first several decades of the 20th century on Santa Rosa Island saw not only the change in ranching from sheep to cattle, but also the introduction of Roosevelt elk and mule deer to add to the island's native mammal populations of



## *Santa Rosa Island: Past, Present and Future*

foxes, skunks and deer mice. The elk and deer prospered, as did the already present feral pigs, enough to allow sport hunting which continues today.

Although cattle has always provided the mainstay of operations for Vail & Vickers on Santa Rosa Island, a few tenant groups have come and gone through the years as well. The first Santa Rosa Island oil exploration, conducted by Standard Oil in 1932, was followed in subsequent years by Signal-Honolulu in 1949-1950, and Mobil Oil in the early 1970s. A total of twelve wells were drilled, however no oil was ever found.

Uncle Sam's presence appeared on the island during World War II, when a radar facility was established on the island's south side. Vail & Vickers' 130 foot motor vessel, *Vaquero I*, was acquired by the government for use in Army transport in the South Pacific. From 1913 until 1943, she had transported personnel, supplies and livestock to and from



*Vaquero II arriving at Santa Rosa Island's Bechers Bay with supplies.*

*(Photograph by William B. Dewey)*



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

the island. Following World War II, an Air Control and Warning Station was built at Johnsons Lee in response to the threat of attack during the Cold War. This facility was manned from 1951 until 1963. It was officially declared abandoned in 1965.

For 85 years, Vail & Vickers has run a continuous cattle operation on Santa Rosa Island, surviving both droughts and floods of the land as well as the cattle market. With the establishment of Channel Islands National Park in 1980, Santa Rosa Island's historic course was set to be altered in the near future.

### **The Future of Santa Rosa Island**

In December 1986, six years after the creation of the Channel Islands National Park, Santa Rosa Island was purchased from Vail & Vickers for just under \$30,000,000. Legislation mandated that Santa Rosa Island be acquired by the government once funding became available. An additional temporary setback was created in 1985 when a lawsuit was brought about by Chumash Indian descendants who claimed ownership rights to several of the northern Channel Islands. Santa Rosa Island's title was cleared, status quo, and escrow closed.

During the transitional stage from private ownership and management to active National Park Service control, studies are being undertaken which will help to guide the government in its future development of Santa Rosa Island. Limited public visitation is scheduled to begin by mid-1987. Government development will begin at Johnsons Lee, the abandoned military facility on the island's south side. Some buildings will be demolished, while others will be renovated for Park Service and public-use facilities. Vail & Vickers will continue to have use of the historic ranch which has been their home since the turn of the century.



## *Santa Rosa Island: Past, Present and Future*



*Cowboys at the mess hall on Santa Rosa Island.*

*(Photograph by William B. Dewey)*

### References

BERGER, R. 1980. Early Man on Santa Rosa Island. Pp. 73-78 in *The California Islands: Proceedings of a Multidisciplinary Symposium*. (D.M. Power, ed.) Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, vii + 787 pp.

CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK. 1985. General Management Plan. January. U.S. Dept. Interior. 97 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1985. Johnsons Lee, Santa Rosa Island: Special Study/Environmental Assessment/Demolition Restoration of Abandoned Military Facilities. U.S. Dept. Interior. 49 pp.

ELLISON, W.H. 1937. *The Life and Adventures of George Nidever (1802-1883)*. U.C. Press x + 128 pp.

HEIZER, R.F. 1972. *California's Oldest Historic Relic?* R.H. Lowie Museum of Anthro., Berkeley. 73 pp.

HOLLAND, F.R. 1962. Santa Rosa Island: An Archaeological and Historical Study. *J. of West* 1(1): 45-62.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY. 1859. Deeds Book C: 288-290.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1865. Deeds Book D: 581-584.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1867. Deeds Book F: 356-357.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1869a. Deeds Book G: 670-671.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1869b. Deeds Book G: 710-711.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1870a. Deeds Book H: 684-686.

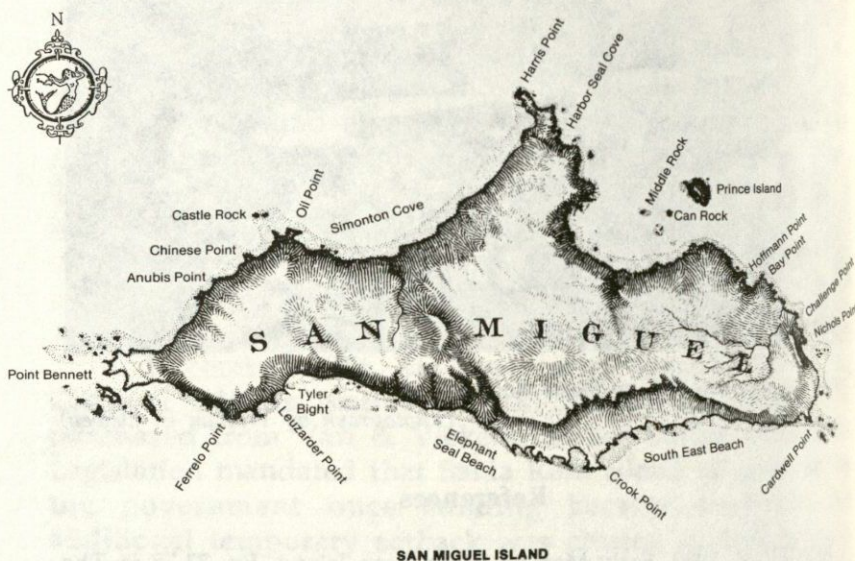
\_\_\_\_\_. 1870b. Deeds Book I: 61-62.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1881. Deeds Book Y: 134-135.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1901. Deeds Book 77: 508-510.



## Santa Cruz Island Foundation



### San Miguel Island

San Miguel Island is 14 square miles in size, and including Prince Island which lies in the entrance to Cuyler Harbor, it contains 9325 acres. It is approximately eight miles long and four miles wide, and it is the westernmost of the Northern Channel Islands. San Miguel Island is in Santa Barbara County. The closest mainland is Point Conception which is 26 miles away. Santa Rosa Island is three miles to the east of San Miguel. Green Mountain, at 831 feet in elevation, is the highest point.

The topography of San Miguel Island is quite low in contrast to the rugged peaks, ridges, and canyons found on some of the larger islands. Waters surrounding the island are often rough and hazardous due to submerged rocks and shoals. Prevailing



northwesterly winds are almost constant, blowing sand quite readily. Dense fog often shrouds the island from view. It is the least accessible of the four Northern Channel Islands, and has been called the "graveyard of the Pacific" due to the large number of shipwrecks.

### Ownership History

San Miguel Island was never granted to anyone during the Mexican era, and so it passed to the U.S. Government with California statehood in 1850. However, as on other Channel Islands, this island has had its share of squatters, fishermen, otter-hunters and lessees.

Ranching on San Miguel Island probably began sometime around the 1850s. The first record of a long-term resident is that of Captain George Nidever. In 1863 he purchased from a Sheriff's sale the island property of Samuel C. Bruce, consisting of 6000 sheep, 125 head of cattle, and 25 horses. Nidever built an adobe, now in ruins, and in 1870 he sold his island interest to Hiram Mills who in turn sold interests to the Pacific Wool Growing Company. William G. Waters bought into San Miguel Island in 1887, and he maintained an interest there until his death in 1917, a period of 30 years.

In 1908, the U.S. Government exercised its right of ownership of San Miguel Island, and in 1909 President Taft issued an executive order reserving the island for lighthouse purposes. Captain Waters was still living on the island, and in 1911 the Government granted Waters a 5 year lease (1911-1916) at \$5 a year. Waters renewed his lease for another 5 years, (1916-1920), this time with partners Robert Brooks and J.R. Moore. In 1920 Brooks renewed the lease alone until the lease was terminated by the Navy in WWII. The Lester family managed the island for Brooks from 1930-1942.

After the War, the island was used by the Navy as a bombing range. Today San Miguel Island is a part of Channel Islands National Park.

-editor



*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*



*Clif Smith on San Miguel Island.*

*(Santa Cruz Island Foundation collection)*



## RANDOM NOTES ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SAN MIGUEL ISLAND

By Clifton F. Smith

*The following article was first published in Santa Barbara Historical Society's Noticias, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Fall, 1977. For this 1989 reprinting, Clif Smith added a new note to be found at the end of the article.*

Clifton F. Smith (b. 1920) is the leading expert on Santa Barbara County history and the author of both *A Flora of Santa Barbara* (1952), and *A Flora of the Santa Barbara Region, California* (1976). He has been collecting plants on the California Channel Islands since the mid 1940s.

For over forty years San Miguel Island has been in view from my house at Santa Barbara, about forty-five miles to the southwest. But with its low profile, one has to strain his eyes to see it, since much of the time the island is shrouded in fog or haze.

It is the farthest west of the local Channel Islands and thus the most maritime, about fourteen thousand acres of dunes, spectacular rocky cliffs, and a picturesque harbor with its own island of several acres. Off-shore near the west end are several oil seeps which someday might threaten its privacy.

But the climate has been a limiting factor. San Miguel is exposed to the open sea, with winds howling out of the northwest in spring and summer, and pity the poor sailor who gets caught in this dilemma. Shipwrecks are a testimony. It can also be a paradise in calm seas and gentle breezes after the fogs lift.

San Miguel Island was once inhabited by Indians, with villages concentrated along bluffs above an abundance of sea foods. It was later "discovered" by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo in



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

October, 1542. And since then it has carved its niche in local history.

The animal population is perhaps normal for an island of this size and isolation. A dwarf mammoth once roamed in early times, apparently at one phase with the Indians, about twenty-five to fifty thousand years ago. This animal had originated as a larger species on the adjacent mainland and later became dwarfed by isolation, first reaching the Channel Islands (Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, San Miguel) while they were an extended peninsula of the Santa Monica Mountains (see note). The geologic history of these islands is a fascinating study within itself, exhibiting continual sinking and rising, and creating many visible wave-cut terraces. Numerous birds are visitors or residents, with one subspecies limited to this island, the San Miguel Song Sparrow. Two mammals are also restricted, a deer mouse and the San Miguel Island Fox, a dwarfed subspecies of the mainland. With a little coaxing the fox becomes sociable and one often wonders how this animal had survived through heavy Indian habitation if they were not friendly toward it. In some coves six species of sea mammals (seals, sea lions) and the sea otter are making a comeback in surrounding waters.

And of particular interest to the writer are the plants of San Miguel Island. Many are endemic or known only on the islands, but most are common to the mainland, a few as remnants of a northern flora that extended south in Pleistocene times. Although there are no pines on the island today, as presently on Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands, pine trees probably existed in the past when the climate was milder, as evidence reveals in the caliche sand casts which are exposed by the relentless winds in swaths across the dunes. The sands literally pour into the sea on the south side. Such erosion probably began after the introduction of sheep in the 1850s and was aggravated by the droughts of 1864 and later. Until 1950, when most of the grazing animals were removed, wind erosion has been a serious threat to the native habitats on San Miguel. But it can be said today that the scars are slowly healing, without the help of modern



*Random Notes on The Natural History  
of San Miguel Island*

man and his range improvements, largely consisting of introduced grasses that violate the beautiful pristine vegetation.

In years of opportune rainfall, wildflowers can be very colorful, especially on the arrested dunes where the San Miguel Locoweed and the Dune Dandelion are abundant. About Cuylers Harbor are reddish yarrow and a buckwheat, while cascading down steep sandy slopes are large colonies of the Island Morning-glory. On cliffs are succulents and the Sea Dahlia. And many annuals in open places, such as Tidy Tips and Gold Fields. Near the west end is a small colony of *Malva Real*, last collected at this locality in 1886, and lately rediscovered as the last plants of this species on the Northern Channel Islands. This shrub with hollyhock-like flowers, is frequently planted on our coastal mainland and about habitations on other nearby islands.

No ferns are known on this island (see note). It is a land where potable water is scarce and the vegetation is favored by fog drip.

Recently, the National Park Service has taken on added responsibilities for the treasures of San Miguel Island, formerly managed by the United States Navy. We hope that the Park Service will protect this isle as a scientific reserve, with limited access to those who appreciate the natural environment of this gem in the western sea.

NOTE: When this article was being written (1977), several scientists were investigating the Northern Channel Islands land bridge theory which commonly asserted a mainland-island connection. However, it is now thought that the island land mass was never connected to the mainland, at least during later geological time. In fact, major portions of the rocks of Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa Islands are not related to the adjacent mainland. So the mammoths and other biota either swam to the islands or were transported by other means. It makes interesting thought. See *Land Vertebrates on the California Channel Islands: Sweepstakes or Bridges?* by Adrian Wenner and Donald L. Johnson, in *The*



## Santa Cruz Island Foundation

*California Channel Islands: Proceedings of a Multidisciplinary Symposium, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 1980.*

No ferns had been known on San Miguel Island until the Channel Islands National Park Service discovered the goldback fern in 1977.



## THE WATERS FAMILY OF SAN MIGUEL

By Stella Haverland Rouse

*The following article was published in Santa Barbara Historical Society's Noticias, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Fall, 1977.*

*Stella H. Rouse is a Santa Barbara historian, author, and columnist for the Santa Barbara News Press. Many of her writings are about various historical aspects of California's Channel Islands.*

Hidden in the pages of Santa Barbara's old newspapers are many strange stories of the city's early residents, but none are more bizarre, perhaps, than the record of Captain William G. Waters, who claimed 14,000-acre San Miguel Island in the late 1800s. With the exception of the report of the "seizure" of the island by President Grover Cleveland, few events of Captain Waters' life were recorded as they happened, but at trials contesting his will in 1917 and 1918 many circumstances were revealed.

Born in Maine in 1838, Captain Waters was descended from English ancestors who settled in the United States early in the eighteenth century. As a young man he was a clerk and apprenticed machinist in Massachusetts. At the outset of the Civil War he enlisted in Company C, Fifteenth Massachusetts, participating in several important battles and being commissioned first lieutenant. He was honorably discharged in 1863 because of physical disability. When the war ended, he was elected captain of the regiment, and was commissioned by Governor Andrews of Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup>

After employment as a master mechanic at manufacturing concerns in civilian life, he was in charge of the press department of the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, of which his brother was half owner. He was asked to install the first



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

Rapid Perfection Printing Press on the Pacific Coast in 1877. For several years he was in charge of press department of the *San Francisco Morning Call*. Information from the California Historical Society reveals that he was listed in *San Francisco Directories* for 1879 and later as "Foreman, press rooms, *Morning Call*." The last directory there to list him, 1885, shows his occupation as "printer."

Captain Waters' first wife had secured a divorce from him in Boston before he came west. While he was in San Francisco, he married Minnie Richardson Scott, who had come to San Francisco in 1861. Because of her failing health, he brought her to Santa Barbara,<sup>2</sup> then considered a tuberculosis health center, in 1887, and became interested in San Miguel Island.

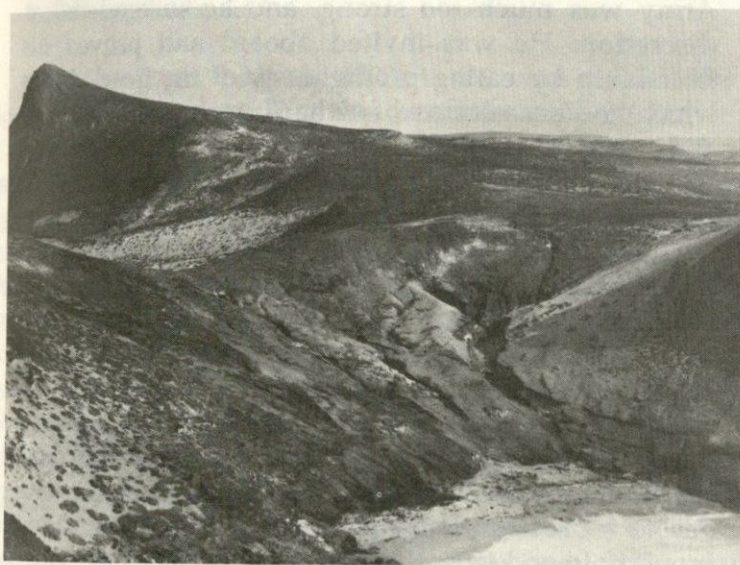
The first Caucasian sojourners on the island were Cabrillo and his men in 1542. Years later they were followed by sea otter hunters, including Captain George Nidever in the 1830s. In 1850 Captain Nidever bought "the right to use the island" from a sheepowner occupant by the name of Bruce and shipped additional stock there.<sup>3</sup> He sold his interest to Hiram and Herman Mills, from whom Mrs. Elizabeth Lester says Captain Waters acquired San Miguel.<sup>4</sup>

While the island seemed bleak and unattractive for many years, probably because of over-grazing of sheep at one time, several governments and individuals have coveted it. In December, 1895, the *Morning Press* reported that England intended to take advantage of a technicality in order to acquire a coaling station between Vancouver and Honolulu. According to the news item, the Channel Islands were not included in the territory which Mexico ceded to the United States after the Mexican War. The treaty was redrawn a few years later, but San Miguel was inadvertently omitted from the list of islands the United States was to acquire, and now England was intervening:

'Tis true that Captain Waters claims the island by right of location and continuous residence, but of course England would not mind a little thing like that.<sup>5</sup>



## *The Waters Family of San Miguel*



*West End of San Miguel Island, 1931.*

*(Santa Barbara Historical Society collection)*

President Grover Cleveland must have heard of the threat, for in July, 1896, Nicholas Covarrubias, local United States Marshal, had orders to sail with a group of surveyors from Gaviota to San Miguel to appropriate the territory. Captain Waters met the marshal when he landed on the beach. The tenant of San Miguel protested only feebly to the "invasion," saying that he would not resist orders from President Cleveland which were read to him. He wanted to protect his sheep, however, and would furnish all the mutton the men needed, provided he could select the animals for slaughter. The captain hospitably sent down a team to haul the men's baggage to their camp.<sup>6</sup>

Years later, Nick Covarrubias told a slightly more flamboyant version of the incident: that since Waters had the reputation of being a "bad hombre," Covarrubias had

set about recruiting an army, chartered vessel and rounded up a formidable bunch of deputies, armed them to the teeth, and set sail for the island. When



Waters saw them in the offing, he decided that the Army was much too strong, and he surrendered at discretion. He was invited aboard and proved his friendship by eating prodigiously of the good things which had been secured for the Army.<sup>7</sup>

The surveyors completed their work, and the island was assumed by many to be a United States Possession, although from time to time usurpers have challenged proprietorship.

In February, 1897, the San Miguel Island Company filed papers of incorporation to

engage in the business of farming and raising stock on San Miguel Island . . . to acquire by grant, lease or otherwise the island, and to sell, convey, lease, rent, etc., the same; to construct, build, equip and operate one or more vessels for transportation of persons and property to and from the island. . . .<sup>8</sup>

The directors were William G. Waters of San Miguel Island, and several Los Angeles men. The capital stock was \$50,000, divided into 5000 shares of the par value of \$10 each. Five hundred dollars had been subscribed.

In March, 1897, two deeds which sounded rather misleading were reported filed in the County Recorder's office:

The first conveys from William G. Waters to Jeremiha (sic) Francis Conway an undivided one-third interest in the island of San Miguel and all property thereon. The second conveys from said William G. Waters and J. F. Conroy to the San Miguel Island Company the whole of San Miguel Island, together with all the property now upon the island, which is enumerated as follows: Three thousand sheep and lambs, eighteen horses and mules, one otter boat, three skiffs, two small boats, one farm wagon, one cart, three plows, one harrow, five saddles and bridles, one set of double harness, blacksmith and

other tools, household furniture and utensils, various buildings, sheds, etc.<sup>9</sup>

Occasionally in the early 1900s there were small items in local newspapers regarding the captain's business activities. On March 17, 1904, he returned from San Miguel where he had spent a month looking after his stock. Since there had been a heavy rainfall, the feed crop would be sufficient to carry him through the summer. He brought back a sack of mushrooms that were unusually large, some of them measuring ten inches across the top.<sup>10</sup> At first he had used sailboats for transportation, but lost three and a sailor overboard, so he purchased a gasoline launch.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes the trip across the channel was made from Gaviota, the shortest distance by boat between the two bodies of land. Each spring men were taken to the island for sheep shearing. They were provided with round metal tokens labeled "San Miguel," with Waters' name and "1 sheep," which they hung as tallies for each sheep shorn.

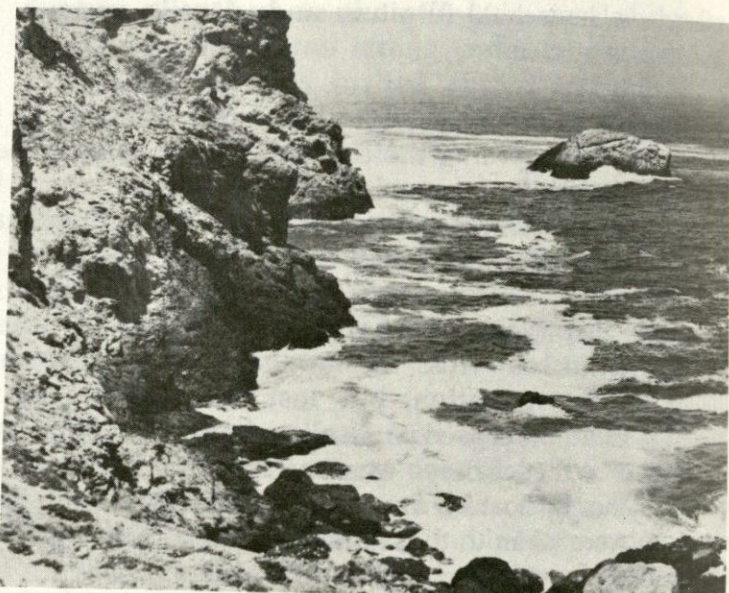
In September, 1916, when Captain Waters renewed his San Miguel lease for an additional five years, until November, 1921, he stated that he believed, if he were younger, he could prove his right of ownership,

because the fact that I lived on the island for twenty-five years without anyone questioning my right, and that I built a home and other buildings there, would, I think, be accepted in Federal courts as proof of my title to the property.<sup>12</sup>

Captain Waters had had a reliable man and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. John Russell, in charge of the place for ten years, and a substantial house had been built by Russell from salvaged shipwreck lumber. Captain Waters was too old to battle the government for a title then, and apparently he was tired of managing his holdings, for on January 9, 1917, he gave to R. L. Brooks and J. R. Moore

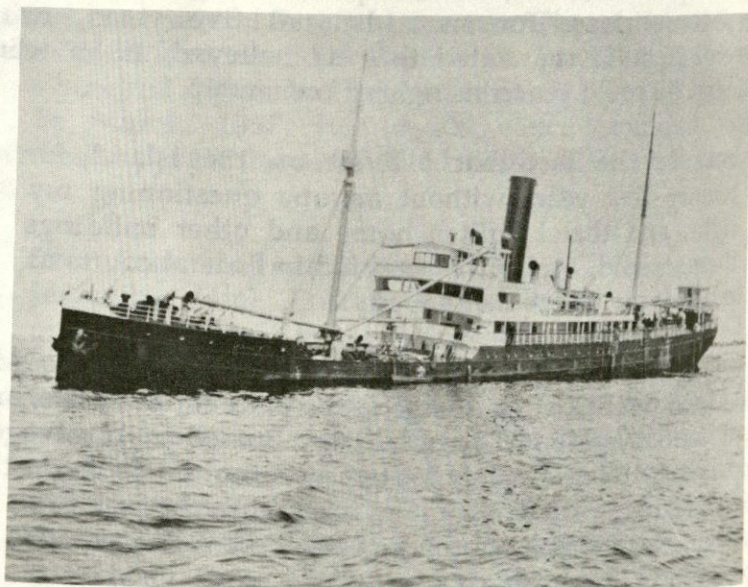


*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*



*Cliffs near Cuyler's Harbor, San Miguel.*

*(Santa Barbara Historical Society collection)*



*One of the many shipwrecks near San Miguel.*

*(Santa Barbara Historical Society collection)*



## *The Waters Family of San Miguel*

a contract for the purchase of all the sheep, cattle and other livestock and the personal property, buildings, fixtures and improvements on San Miguel Island. . . . together with the lease. . . . Captain Waters had of said island from the United States government for the period of five years from November 1, 1916.<sup>13</sup>

The purchase price was \$30,000 of which \$10,000 was paid then, and the balance of \$20,000 was to be paid in amounts of \$4000 annually in July, 1917, through July, 1921. There were supposed to be 2500 sheep for shearing.

Captain Waters had brought his second wife to Santa Barbara for her health in 1887. However, on August 10, 1889, the Morning Press stated that they had been in San Francisco securing treatment for her for a year, but were returning to live permanently in Santa Barbara since she seemingly had recovered. A death certificate in the Santa Barbara County Recorder's office states that she died of "consumption," January 17, 1890.

In April, 1917, Captain Waters suffered a stroke which resulted in his death, April 16, 1917. He had participated in local civic affairs, and had served a term as commander of the California and Nevada Department of the G. A. R. His obituaries stated that he was one of the founders of the Santa Barbara Club, and had been a member of the Jonathan Clubs of San Francisco and Los Angeles, the Knights Templars and the Masonic Lodge.<sup>14</sup>

The seventy-nine-year-old man left property, including real estate, stock in the Arlington Hotel and cash valued at \$48,000. Most of the estate, to be administered by the Santa Barbara Trust Company, was willed to an elderly brother in Boston. Interest on a \$5000 trust was to go to Charles, his son by his first wife, and one dollar to Edith, the foster child of his (second) deceased wife. This girl had been adopted when two and one-half years old by Mrs. Scott, a widow, in 1875, and by him June 3, 1887, after their marriage.<sup>15</sup> She later was the subject of considerable newspaper publicity.

The young girl had been in her teens when Mrs. Waters died in 1890, and Captain Waters attempted to rear her



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

according to his standards. His opinion of Edith's character probably led to disinheriting her. Edith Scott-Walker-Basford-Burritt, his adopted daughter, asked that his holographic will be set aside because he left her only one dollar, because he was "mentally obsessed regarding the plaintiff", and "unduly influenced" by his ninety-two-year-old brother, John, to whom he left most of his estate.

A deposition sent from Boston by John for the first trial indicated that he had visited his brother, William once years previously, and had been coming west every year for about ten years to spend the winter. John stated that he thought he was in the room in 1916 when Captain Waters typed his will, but he did not know what was in it. He knew that his brother had been perturbed by Edith's conduct years previously, but he did not know the circumstances. The father and his adopted daughter had not communicated for some time. There were unanswered questions regarding whether Captain Waters had mishandled property Edith's foster mother left to her, and whether he had used some of her money in instituting farming operations on San Miguel Island.<sup>16</sup>

At the conclusion of the first short trial, December, 1917, the jury failed to reach a verdict.<sup>17</sup>

In the second trial, May, 1918,<sup>18</sup> the stellar role was taken by Edith Scott Burritt,

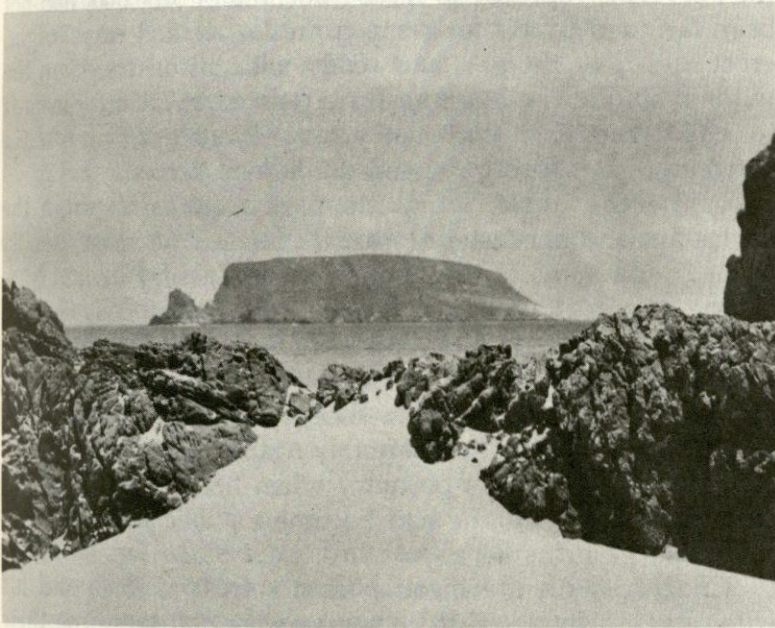
a brilliant writer and theatrical woman, who, though disappointments and sorrow have been her lot, is very attractive and has a winning way with her.

During portions of the trial she sat "quietly knitting." She was described by a reporter:

A pleasant faced, matronly woman, dressed in plain clothes, she seemed anything but the fascinating vampire that the defendant's attorney sought to paint her. She shows traces of having once been a most remarkably handsome woman, but the years have erased all but a calm, pleasing, motherly look. Her



## *The Waters Family of San Miguel*



*Prince Island taken from San Miguel Island beach.*

*(Santa Barbara Historical Society collection)*

small son, a child by her last husband, plays around the courtroom, a happy, well-behaved little fellow, and comes in for a part of her care. . . .

She made "a splendid witness," for she was "quiet and well poised."

Her voice, low and deep-throated, could be heard distinctly in all parts of the courtroom and she was never asked to repeat her answers.

On the defense side was John A. Waters, who had been a financial partner in the island sheep business, it was said. He, according to the complaint, had unduly influenced his brother to exclude Mrs. Burritt and Charles, the son by his first wife, from a major inheritance. Captain Waters had seemed the healthier of the two, and was several years younger. John,



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

the survivor, reported to have a fortune of \$250,000, had not been fatigued by his long trip from Boston, and was "bright, erect, quick of thought and ready with his answers" on the witness stand. The *Morning Press* pointed out that he seemed to enjoy the trial immensely, and "watched every move between the opposing counsels with great interest."

While the uncle, John, occupied a seat apart from the contestant and her foster brother, he seemed "to be on friendly terms" with some of the family, for on Tuesday he and Mrs. Charles Waters "took lunch together and chatted gaily."

Charles Waters, the Captain's son, had left his grain business in St. Paul, Minnesota, about 1907, at the invitation of his father, to help in the sheep business here. Later, his father had "turned unaccountably against him," and in 1912, according to Charles's obituary when he died at the age of seventy-two in 1936, he had become a public accountant for several large firms here.<sup>19</sup>

Charles, with the income from a trust of \$500, and his wife, given a lot on Third Avenue, were not contesting their bequests, but were testifying for Edith's good character, for anyone questioning his share in the will was to be cut off with nothing.

Edith's life was reviewed thoroughly during the second trial in May, 1918: The young girl had had some previous dramatic and musical training before Waters' adoption of her when she was about fourteen years old, and for a while the captain had

willingly joined his wife in giving the child every advantage that money could buy.

Although he then had been proud of her talents, achievements and progress, when she was called home from an exclusive girls' seminary in San Francisco because of her mother's illness, the attorney held, she found Captain Waters changed. He had become

critical and fault-finding, and suspicious of her every act. Even before the mother's death in January, 1890,



## *The Waters Family of San Miguel*

he had begun to turn against the child that he had been so fond of. He began watching her when she practiced her music, and would not let her go to a neighbor's house and practice because the neighbor had a young son. He said she could not be trusted and refused to allow her to attend the dances at the Arlington, where because of her high spirits and beauty and musical ability was a general favorite.

After Mrs. Waters' death, the girl, then about sixteen, instead of returning to her studies, was taken by Captain Waters to San Miguel, where she spent four years, with only occasional trips to Santa Barbara, San Francisco and other places. She was "virtually a prisoner" on the bleak island, composed of

rocks and white sand; limestone hills and one green mountain; a roughly builded house in which railroad ties form a part of the construction; a bunk house for the men, and corrals for the sheep, hogs and cattle, where the wind blows a gale all the time.

According to her, it was a "life of hard toil, lacking in every comfort, devoid of affection from the captain," who had said he was taking her to the island "where she could be watched." She told how she had removed the worn-out matting from her little room under the eaves, "because the matting contained so many fleas." After the girl lived on the island for a while, a friend, Mrs. Gatey, told Captain Waters that while she enjoyed Edith's visit to the mainland, her dresses were so old-fashioned and worn that she would have to ask the girl to terminate her stay.

The San Francisco attorneys for the plaintiff showed by witnesses' testimony that the girl had borne an excellent reputation when she was younger, and that she had been reared by a particular mother. They declared that she had been obedient to her father while she was on the island, and that



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

when sworn at by the captain and told to go into the house, she had always obeyed without comment.

When the counsel for the defense (William G. Griffith and Harry W. T. Ross) had its turn, the attorneys

drew the picture of a headstrong, wilful girl, rebelling at every precaution taken to protect her character . . . high-spirited and fond of the gay side of life, and who later wore out the patience of the father by continually trying to get money from him.

They declared that Captain Waters had been "in financial straits" when he took her from the more comfortable surroundings, and that he had provided as good clothing as he could afford, and a "horse for her amusement."

While several fishermen had told of the work she was required to do, and how roughly her foster father had treated her, a young man whose mother worked for the captain on the island testified that since his mother had been employed there, Edith did not have to work. A woman visitor recounted that she had found the cabin home "clean and comfortable", and Edith's room a pretty one, with a shelf of good books and pictures on the walls.

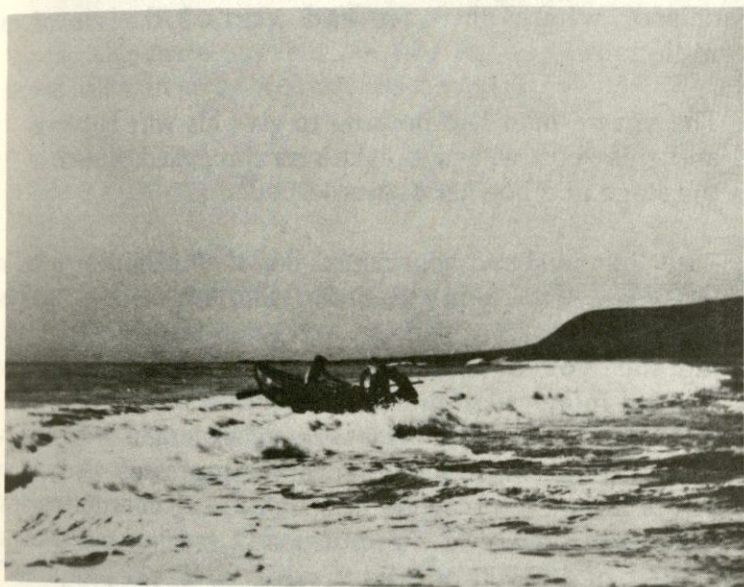
According to plaintiff, the dreary life there culminated in her flight from San Miguel. An unkempt waterfront character who sometimes gathered guano on the islands and brought it to the mainland in his skiff, landed her at Gaviota, where she took a stagecoach for Santa Barbara. This account of her escape greatly interested the jury, and

when Mrs. Burritt said that she knew the end of the boat was filled with wool because she could see the brown sacks and smell the wool, one of the older men nodded his head as if he, too, knew the odor peculiar to clipped wool.

Then had begun a part of her life which was publicized

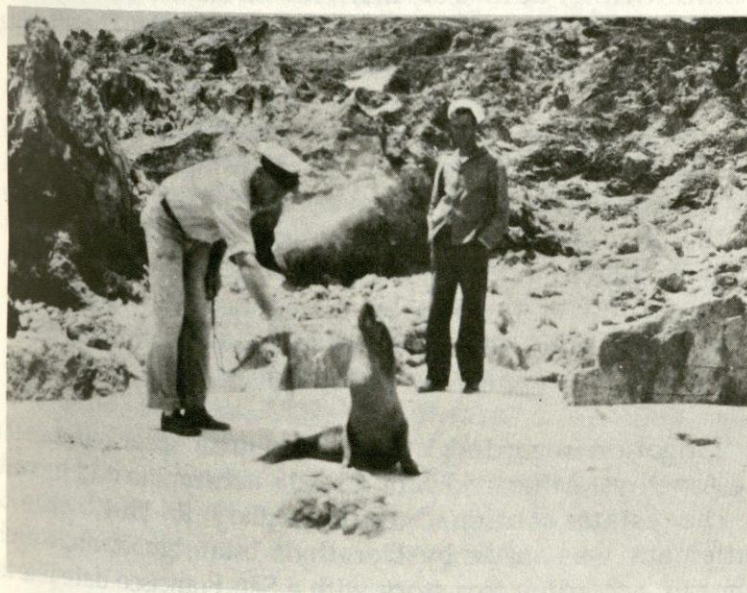


## *The Waters Family of San Miguel*



*Launching a boat in the waves.*

*(Santa Barbara Historical Society collection)*



*Coast Guard with seal, 1934.*

*(Santa Barbara Historical Society collection)*



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

Francisco, where she met and married the son of an ex-millionaire.

The young man had nothing to give his wife but love, and this soon waned, so she was compelled to stick to the stage and hoe her own row. . . .<sup>20</sup>

After her husband abandoned her, their child was born in the Los Angeles County Hospital. She left the baby girl in charge of Mrs. M. S. Chisholm, and returned to San Francisco, asking the woman to find a married couple to adopt the rather frail infant, Dorothy.

Nicholas C. Creede, discoverer of Colorado gold mines, saw the infant and was favorably impressed. Adoption followed.<sup>21</sup> Some time about 1895 he had begun action against his wife for divorce on the grounds of cruelty, and made a settlement of \$20,000 on Mrs. Creede. The "old prospector" died July 14, 1897, leaving an estate valued at "less than \$500,000" to his adopted child, Dorothy.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, Edith had married "an honest business man from San Francisco," but she could not get the "bewitching infant" back since she had been legally adopted, but

after the death of Creede there was a fight of many interested parties for the guardianship of the child. The probate wisely, however, determined that under the circumstances the mother was the proper one for that place, so that despite the one-time little likelihood of the two being reunited, they are now together again, and will probably so remain until the little heiress attains her majority.<sup>23</sup>

Litigation regarding "the millionaire's" previous sale of the Amethyst Mine, and Mrs. Creede's attempt to acquire part of the estate continued until January 9, 1901, when a settlement was made by Dorothy's estate guardian, Roger Johnson, according to a story with a San Francisco date line in the *Denver Times*.<sup>24</sup>

Portions of Edith's life in the theatrical world were



## *The Waters Family of San Miguel*

reviewed by Attorneys Griffith and Ross to prove her "questionable character," but the jury reached a verdict on the second ballot, in favor of Edith Scott Burritt,

a complete vindication of Mrs. Burritt, as her character was the point at issue in the matter.

According to the *Daily News*, the jury considered the captain "of unsound mind [in relation to his children] when his will was made."

Uncle John is perhaps the most cheerful loser of a \$50,000 estate that has ever appeared in court. His principal worry was the question that he had used undue influence to get his brother to leave him his estate, and when this question was settled, he lost all interest in the case. According to the court's instructions, the estate will be equally divided between the daughter, Edith Scott Burritt of Santa Monica, and the son, Charles D. Waters of this city.

Attorney Griffith notified the court that he would move for a new trial. When the third hearing was about to take place in April, 1920, the case was settled out of court "by payment of \$2500 to Mrs. Edith Scott Burritt," who had contested the will. The court found that Captain Waters was sane, and the Santa Barbara Trust Company was made administrator of the estate, to be distributed as designated in the will.<sup>25</sup>

In the mid-1920s Edith Scott (Waters-Walker-Bashford) Burritt lived in Santa Barbara for a while, according to local *Directories*. In April, 1927, she directed a Strollers' play, Laurence Houseman's *A Chinese Lantern*, presented in the lounge of the Samarkand Hotel. Only one resident, who as a boy lived with his family next door to her, recalls her slightly, but her later life and that of her children is unrecorded locally.

She died December 21, 1935, in Victoria, B. C. Her death certificate gives her occupation, "singer," and marital status,



"divorced." Charles, her foster brother, died June 24, 1936, and the Trust Department of the County National Bank, Santa Barbara, in settling the trust from which Charles had benefitted for almost twenty years, listed four living descendants of Edith as beneficiaries: two men by the name of Basford, of three sons born to that marriage; Roland Burritt, the surviving son of two boys born to Edith under the name of Burritt, and the only son receiving property under her own will. Dorothy Walker-Creede-Ritchie, her daughter, had died in 1918, but Dorothy's daughter, born in 1917, survived, and inherited personal property of Edith Scott Burritt, her grandmother.<sup>26</sup>

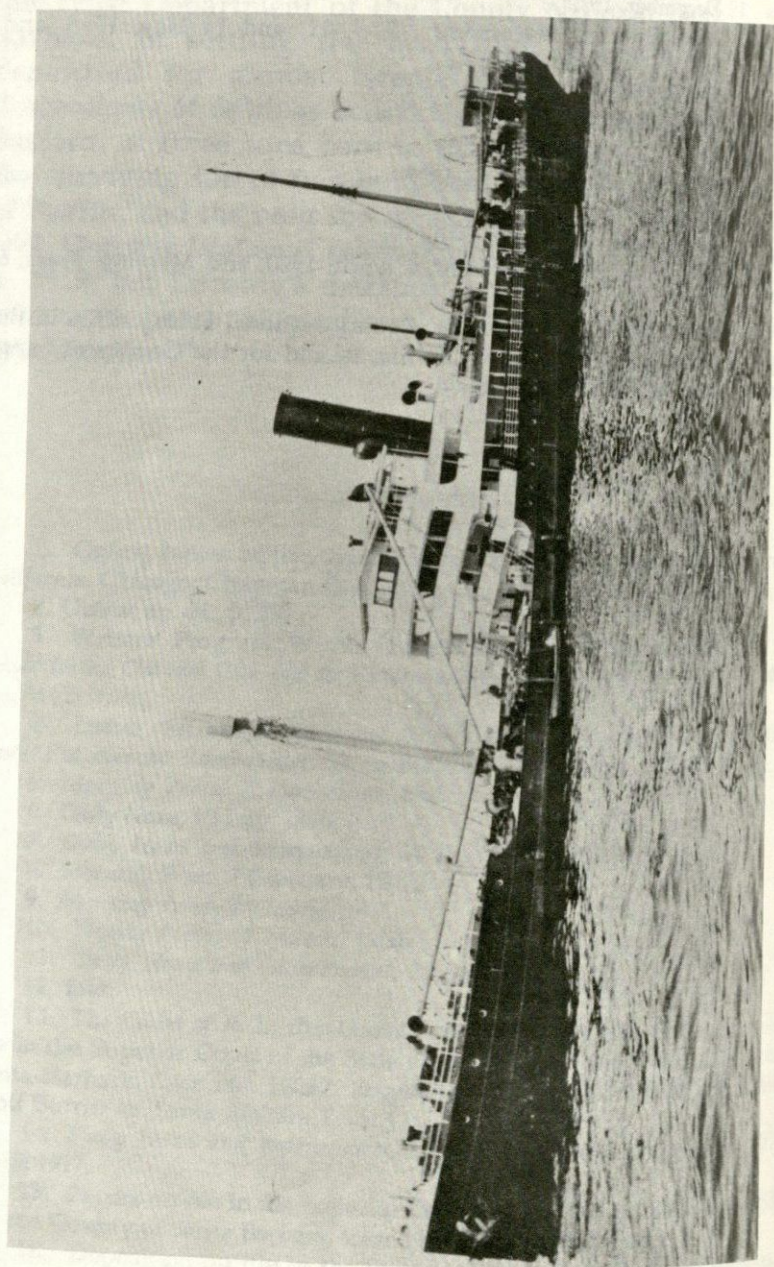
Footnotes

1. Guinn, James Miller. *Historical and Biographical Record of Southern California*. Chicago: Chapman Publishing Co., 1902, p. 649.
2. Guinn, op. cit., p. 250
3. Writers' Program, Works Projects Administration. *Santa Barbara: A Guide to the Channel City and its Environs*. New York: Hastings House, 1941, pp. 74-75.
4. Lester, Elizabeth Sherman. *The Legendary King of San Miguel: the Lesters at Rancho Rambouillet*. Santa Barbara: W. T. Genns, 1974, p. 2.
5. *Morning Press*, 22 December, 1895.
6. *Daily News*, 13 July, 1896. (sic)
7. *Daily News and Independent*, 30 December, 1922.
8. *Morning Press*, 7 February, 1897.
9. *Morning Press*, 9 March, 1897.
10. *Weekly Press*, 17 March, 1904.
11. *Daily News and Independent*, 25 September, 1916.
12. *ibid.*
13. *The Claim of R. L. Brooks and J. R. Moore for Credit on Contract*, on file in the Superior Court of the State of California, in and for the County of Santa Barbara, Case No. 10262, litigation over Captain Waters' will. Edith Scott Burritt vs. Santa Barbara Trust Co.
14. *Daily News and Independent*, 27 April, 1917, and *Morning Press*, 27 April, 1917.
15. Papers on file in the Superior Court of the State of California, in and for the County of Santa Barbara, Case No. 10262, listed above.
16. Deposition on file in the Superior Court of the State of California, Case No. 10262, listed above.

17. *Daily News and Independent*, 19 December, 1917, and *Morning Press*, 19 December, 1917
18. *Daily News and Independent*, 7, 8, 11, and 14 May, 1918, and *Morning Press*, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 14, 1918.
19. *Morning Press*, 25 June, 1936.
20. *Morning Press*, 25 July, 1895.
21. *Herald*, 29 December, 1899.
22. *Denver Republican*, July 15, 1897.
23. *Herald*, op. cit.
24. *Denver Times*, 9 January, 1901.
25. *Daily News and Independent*, 6 April, 1920, and *Morning Press*, 6 April, 1920.
26. Report of Trust Department, County National Bank, on file in the Superior Court of the State of California, in and for the County of Santa Barbara, Case No. 10262, listed above.



*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*





## THE WRECK OF THE CUBA

By Horace A. Sexton

*The following article was first published in Santa Barbara Historical Society's Noticias, Vol. V, No. 3, Fall, 1959.*

*Horace Sexton (1885-1971) was a member of the Sexton family of Goleta. In addition to the following article about the wreck of the Cuba on San Miguel Island, Horace Sexton wrote an article for Noticias in 1981 about a camping trip he took to Santa Cruz Island in 1922.*

Back in Prohibition days, on September 9th, 1923, Captain Eaton dropped into my shop about 4 P.M. with the news that there was a liner aground on San Miguel Island. He said it was from South America and surely had liquor aboard and for me to grab all the cash I could gather and meet him at the wharf as soon as possible. It was a convenient time for me and, as I always enjoyed these short trips with Ira. I was aboard when, just before sunset, the *Sea Wolf* headed for a spot somewhere around San Miguel Island.

Ira figured if she was from South America, the ship must be around the west end or south side; so, after cruising the south side, we finally came upon her about midnight at the extreme west end of the island. Locating her was not difficult, for she was ablaze with lights. As we couldn't get to her through the reef in the darkness, we dropped back around a headland into Southeast Harbor to wait until morning.

At daylight, we could make out a tent on shore, so we put of in the skiff to the beach. Here we met the captain, third officer, and two South American stewards of the Pacific Mail Liner, *Cuba*, who were cooking breakfast. The captain told us the story of how the ship was grounded—it seems that he had shot the sun three days before and had been running through fog ever since. He had given orders to be called at midnight, which would give him ample time to check his bearings with



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

Richardson Rock Light, but was still in his bunk at four a.m. when she grounded, two miles off her course. He said some of the forty passengers had been put ashore in life-boats and others, while cruising outside in the ship's motor-boat, were sighted by one of the surviving torpedo boats from the Honda wreck. This wreck, in which several torpedo boats were destroyed, coincidentally happened the same night.

The torpedo boat put back and took on board all the passengers from the beach, together with a million dollars in bullion, the ship's papers, and, much to our disgust, some of the liquor. When we brought the news that his passengers had all arrived safely in San Pedro, the Captain was greatly relieved and asked us to breakfast. After trying to eat raw ham in scrambled eggs, we took him and his followers on board the *Sea Wolf* and ran around the point to the wreck. There we found the *Cuba* hard aground on a rock about midship, with bow and stern hanging free, her port-rail nearly awash and the bow pointing seaward and pretty well down.

The freighter *Homer* was standing by outside and had worked all night by lights from the wireless batteries, transferring all the coffee that was still dry from the after hold. The third officer of the *Cuba* claimed he had several cases of liquor, so we made a deal with him for the lot. When he took us aboard, we were all terribly disappointed to find that the crew of the *Homer* had located the hiding place. However, we got away with a few deck chairs, fire extinguishers, etc.; but the Captain asked us to lay off, which we did. About nine o'clock, the *Homer* completed loading the coffee and received wireless orders to proceed to San Francisco. They took with them the Captain and crew from the *Cuba* and we were told that the guards for the ship were on their way from San Pedro and should arrive any minute.

No sooner was the *Homer* out of sight than we made fast the *Sea Wolf* to the lee rail of the stranded ship. We started to work frantically loading whatever took our fancy, expecting every minute to see the guards appear. It would be impossible for me to list the articles that we removed that morning. Ira, Leno, a kid deck-hand, and I worked like mad to get all we could before the arrival of the guards. We even had the



## The Wreck of the Cuba

dining room chairs stacked on the forward hatch with other things ready to load, when we sighted a water-taxi, bouncing towards us. This was a signal to load fast if we were to get what we had cut loose. There were four men on the taxi, three with guns on their hips. The afternoon swell was coming in and the water was choppy, so one of the visitors held the taxi off, while the other three stood on the *Sea Wolf* and ordered us to put everything back on board.

"Keep loading," Ira said, and we did just that.

The main guard got very abusive while standing up there but Ira said:

"Keep loading, boys."

Finally after using some of the choicest profanity I have ever heard, and working himself up to a fever heat, this guard threatened to shoot the next man that moved. I was sure he meant what he was saying and, believe me, I was plenty scared. Ira, perfectly calm, walked to the rail, and said:

"What right have you got to abuse us this way?"

"Here is my authority," the guard said, and threw down a telegram, which Ira read and handed back to him, and said to the rest of us:

"Keep loading."

This brought forth a volley of cursing and threats and I thought surely he would cut loose on all of us. But Ira, with no fear at all, grinned, walked over to him, and said:

"Mr.! That telegram says you were sent here to guard this ship and I figure you have not arrived here yet." Turning to us, he said: "Keep loading, boys."

As soon as the guard figured this out, he jumped down on the deck of the *Cuba*.

"Okay, boys," Ira said. "Get aboard. The guard has arrived, so we are through."

Every swell that came in caused the spray to sweep the deck from the starboard side and the *Sea Wolf* was surging badly by now. The *Cuba* was creaking and groaning down below where the rock was grinding its way up into the boilers. After Leno had started the engine, Ira told me to run up forward and cast off the big two-inch hauser that we had used to make the *Sea Wolf* fast. The guards stopped me and said:



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

"Like h--- you will! That line belongs to the ship."

"How can you prove that?" Ira asked. "One end is fastened here and the other end is fastened there and I say it's mine."

Ira saw that I was on the spot, (and I really was on the spot) so he said:

"By the way, are you fellows going to spend the night on board here? There is a bad ground swell and a sea making up, and, by the way the rivets are popping, I believe this ship will crack in two before morning.

This certainly gave the guards something to think about as they could not beach their gear with the water-taxi. The boatman had his hands full keeping the water-taxi clear and was anxious to get back to San Pedro. Finally the guards wisely decided they had better bargain with us. So Ira made a deal to put them ashore in our skiff if they would help us load the remainder of the plunder that we had collected, with some hams and bacon that we had neglected to bring up from the refrigerator room. The banging and groaning, as the plates buckled down below, helped the guards to make up their minds and, after loading, they cast off the hauser forward for us.

It was with a sigh of relief that we crossed the rip-tide between Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa, for the *Sea Wolf's* hold and cabin were crammed full and a heavy deckload lashed on, which brought her scuppers awash. We reached Pelican Bay about 11 P.M.

I never expect to be as tired and hungry again in my life as I was when I sat down to that swell meal that Gilchrist cooked for us upon our arrival. Aside from the raw ham and scrambled eggs on shore and some crackers and cheese we had found on board the *Cuba*, we had taken no time off for eating. Needless to say, we had found no liquor after the crew of the *Homer* had combed the ship, but we did find a half-empty bottle that someone had hidden in the pedals of the player piano. Also, they had overlooked several packages of marijuana, which we found in a paint locker. This Ira estimated to market at about thirty dollars, but threw into the ocean through a porthole in disgust.



## *The Wreck of the Cuba*

It might be interesting to know that what we did in ransacking the *Cuba* was perfectly legal, owing to a technicality—the captain had neglected to drop his anchor and the ship was abandoned without being tied, even though hard aground.

Ira afterwards bought the whole ship and cargo for \$700.00, but realized little from it, aside from the first day's plunder. It took so long for the transaction to be completed with Lloyds of London that the cargo of coffee had been too long under water and oil from the fuel tanks made salvaging operations very expensive and dangerous.

NOTE: The Santa Cruz Island Foundation collection contains the wheelhouse clock, numerous tables, a galley tray, and several wooden ladder rungs from the wreck of the *Cuba*. Ira Eaton sold most of these items to Edwin Stanton in 1937 when Stanton purchased the western 9/10ths of Santa Cruz Island. The Foundation archives also contains a copy of Lloyds of London's letter selling salvage rights of the *Cuba* to Ira Eaton.

-editor



*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*



*San Miguel Island sheep shearing tokens.*

*(Photograph by William B. Dewey)*



## SAN MIGUEL ISLAND "CROOKERY"

By Whitney T. Genns

*This article was originally published in the Autumn, 1976 issue of La Reata, the publication of the Santa Barbara Corral of The Westerners. In 1977, permission was given to the Santa Barbara Historical Society by the author for reprinting. It then appeared in Santa Barbara Historical Society's Noticias in Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Fall, 1977.*

*Whitney T. Genns (1900-1979) was a leading Santa Barbara bookseller interested in the Channel Islands. His special limited edition of Elizabeth Lester's The Legendary King of San Miguel Island containing an island sheep-shearing token is a rare collector's item.*

To begin with, during the course of publishing Elizabeth Sherman Lester's *The Legendary King of San Miguel: The Lesters of Rancho Rambouillet*, I realized that much would have to be sacrificed in order to sum up the high-lights of daily life on San Miguel Island. There was enough good material for several books, and at this time I am borrowing from the unpublished portions of her notes to elaborate upon one of the most confusing, confining and confounding chores faced by the Lesters, every day—that of concocting three meals a day for themselves, guests and the sheepshearers, out of very limited irregular and monotonous stores. Mrs. Lester once confided that she practiced "crookery," not cookery, for she stole every idea she could to adapt for their needs in their primitive and isolated state, so I am also borrowing her apt title for this additional occasion.

In the beginning there was lamb, and then more lamb. Lamb to roast, lamb to broil, lamb to stew and to make ragout. No matter what one did with lamb it still tasted like lamb. Whether one curried it or buried it in Hot Sauce or stuffed it



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

with dressing, or roasted its eyes, or broiled its tails, or dredged its shanks, or disguised it as "Mountain Oysters." One learned first to remove its tell-tell suet which quickly became tallow, when cold, and supplant it with some other anointment: olive oil, bacon grease, sausage fat—anything except lamb fat, for lamb.

But the sheepshearers loved their greasy food—their favourite stew swam in grease which they sopped with hard bread, or biscuits or cornbread, so the greatest obstacle to overcome when cooking for the crew was to rearrange the grease factor so that it appeared in their concoctions and disappeared in the Lester's fare. To simplify this arduous process during shearing time all lamb concoctions were skimmed of their excess fats, and the skimmings were used to make a dreadful dish which the shearers loved and the Lesters let alone, this being a hot sauce. Compounded of rendered lamb fat, chopped onions, crushed dried chili peppers, canned tomatoes and several dashes of every condiment on hand, this defied any nationality for it had to be served piping hot, because of its greasy content, and once laced over food, so nearly disguised the original flavor it became a splendid mask for leftovers, if one had the constitution for it. The rice left from curried lamb and rice could immediately become Spanish Rice. Red beans, otherwise basking in the broth from bacon rind, onions and garlic, promptly became Chili Beans.

If one had the heart to completely ruin this sauce by chilling it and skimming off the grease, one could make a very passable Chutney by adding some chopped dried fruits—particularly prunes, peaches, and apricots.

On the rare occasions when such luxuries as canned pineapple and other tropical fruits were available in sufficient quantity to allow for dabbling with, some might be allowed in the Chutney, but these were otherwise reserved for fruit cocktails, desserts, jelly or sauces for the myriad varieties of puddings assembled from odds and ends of bread, cornmeal, rice, potatoes, carrots, squash, bananas, and the whole thing tied into a muslin sack and either boiled or steamed into servitude.



## *San Miguel Island "Crookery"*

The business of sauces, about the only thing aside from desserts one could get frivolous with, broadened from the original Hot Sauce/Chutney combination to the "King's" favourite Sauce Bernaise. Instead of the required eggs and butter added at the last, the "King" learned to be quite satisfied with a judicious amount of margarine, canned milk and some cornstarch for thickness. Probably the most successful of all the sauces was the one known as the "Queen's." This started with pan drippings and flour, browned and enough hot water to make a paste; then one added a spoon or so of brown sugar or maple syrup, honey, or anything else sweet. A sprinkle of salt and sage or similar herb; then more hot water and perhaps some broth or red wine to make the required amount of liquid for the sauce. This rather piquant concoction was good on anything and, when added to leftover lamb for hash, was a superb blender.

Chicken eggs, purchased by the crate, were reserved for delicate recipes with little seasoning to disguise the flavor, and also for breakfasts. Otherwise, the eggs from "Mother Goose", a holiday present to the children from George Knowlton, were relied upon. (Such eggs are extremely mucous and impossible to whip lightly, but for bulk and texture they are superb where their use is restricted to "binding ingredients.") The eggs of sea birds, regularly brought to the island by Robert Ord, were used extravagantly in any recipe requiring spices and condiments. These eggs, small like those of the bantam or quail and thin-shelled, made up a large portion of the egg consumption when the crated eggs ran out.

Whether in New England or on San Miguel, Friday was "fish day." If, by some happenstance of weather, fresh fish did not appear, courtesy of the friendly fishermen, who were glad to exchange their ware for something else—almost anything else, if it were hot and ready to eat—Friday became "mock fish" day. Mock fish came to the table in various forms: creamy macaroni and cheese, clam fritters with bacon, salmon loaf, fish and potato croquettes, Welsh Rarebit with sardines or Cheese fondue. This erratic departure in diet only prevailed in the absence of the sheepshearers, who would



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

have none of this wispy fare. If they could not gnaw it, crunch it, or let it linger savoringly and scorchingly on their tongues, it was not suitable fare.

When supplies did arrive, by whatever means, and a new complement of stores temporarily vanquished that old devil fear of inadequate diet, the "Queen" was to be found in the pantry and drying room where she carefully sorted out the perishables from the staples and stored each in its own province. Large crocks with tight-fitting lids held the ingredients of future delights, safe from the gluttony of rodents. Ample tables in the drying room were used to spread out the vegetables and fruits, which must be checked and turned regularly to avoid spoilage. The meats hung in their own department and were almost exclusively the province of the "King," an excellent butcher and curer.

As the citrus fruits were used, their rinds were dried, candied, and turned into another delicacy. Grated orange and lemon rind, sugared into a tincture, were used in place of vanilla when possible, for syrup base and for punch. Candied peel relieved the absence of formerly enjoyed confections, and was an addition to the fruit cakes and puddings. Added to raisins and nuts and blended with honey, candied peel made a toothsome spread for "tea sandwiches" and for cake fillings, or Banbury Tarts.

The "Queen of San Miguel," under the firm and gentle tutelage of the "King," earned her honors from the day she stepped forth into the kitchen of Rancho Rambouillet and faced a bewildering set of circumstances, a crew of hungry strangers and the distinct feeling that she was on stage with an act she hadn't rehearsed. Whether it was truly cookery or "crookery" that won her applause as she built her fumbling experiences, she, with her modest skill and tremendous enthusiasm, made the kitchen of the old ranch a warm, hospitable and memorable place to be—almost exclusively for men—a rare tribute from a rare breed.



## THE CABRILLO MONUMENT ON SAN MIGUEL ISLAND

By Isaac Antonio Bonilla

*The following article first appeared in Santa Barbara Historical Society's Noticias in Vol. V, No. 3, Fall, 1959.*

*Isaac (Ike) Bonilla was born in Santa Barbara in 1903. His Channel Islands connections go back to his childhood when his father was employed on Santa Cruz Island.*

Little did I know of the trials and tribulations that were to be forthcoming when on October 27th, 1936, I received a call from Dr. Joaquim Leite. Dr. J. R. S. Leite, Grand Historian of The Cabrillo Civic Clubs Inc. of San Francisco, had been in communication with Mr. Wallace Penfield of Santa Barbara, asking his advise on a person qualified and willing to undertake the mission of getting a fitting monument to San Miguel Island. This monument was to be placed on the island as a memorial to the Portuguese explorer, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo.

Mr. Penfield had received information to the effect that I was a direct descendant of a noted explorer named Bonilla.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Leite informed me that the target date to dedicate the monument would be January 3rd, 1937.

Dedication of the monument was to start a campaign to rename San Miguel Island in honor of Cabrillo. A resolution was introduced by Assemblyman Yorty at Sacramento, in 1936, to change the name of San Miguel to Cabrillo Island. This name change was to take place on the 400th anniversary of Cabrillo's death, January 3rd 1942.

With all this information as to the purpose back of the proposed expedition, I set forth upon it with a stout heart.



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

First, I had a suitable granite monument made of a cross on a base in two pieces (for ease of handling) and then I wrote to Herbert Lester, the caretaker of San Miguel Island, explaining our contemplated pilgrimage to Cabrillo's Isle of burial.

I made arrangements with a local fisherman that, in return for grubstaking him for the winter, he would attempt to land me and the monument on San Miguel at Cuyler's Harbor.

Mr. Lester had sent a sketch of the harbor showing where best to land and where he would be able to meet us with a horse and sled for transportation to the headland he had selected as a suitable location for the monument. We made five trips to Cuyler's Harbor in a 35-foot fishing boat and on one occasion it was necessary to lay inside the harbor for four days because the seas were breaking white across the bar at the entrance. We laid to under the lee of the cliff and put the cross and base in the skiff, ready to make a try for it through the breakers; but I was afraid we would lose one or both pieces overboard and so, finally, I gave up. The breakers were at times fifteen feet high on the beach. I felt it best to return again to port without having completed our task. I wrote to Dr. Leite reporting that at this time of year the only way we could get on the island was by air and that I would call on George Hammond, who was a friend of the Lesters and had landed his plane on the island many times, for assistance. (Mr. Hammond and Dr. Leite had flown over earlier in the year to confer with Mr. Lester and to select a suitable site for the monument.)

The plan to fly the monument or to try again in a small boat was decided to be too risky and, as the time was now growing short, Dr. Leite decided to request the aid of the Coast Guard through the Consular office in San Francisco.

The target date of January 3rd was now only two weeks away, so we decided to take the monument along with us on the pilgrimage and set it up right then and there.

Many notables interested in early California history had been contacted and a caravan of Portuguese in cars came down from San Francisco and Monterey.



## *The Cabrillo Monument on San Miguel Island*

The Cabrillo Civic Clubs, who were sponsoring the pilgrimage, had selected the Carrillo Hotel as headquarters and on the evening before the crossing, after a toast to our venture with old Maderia wine, we met with Dr. Carlos Fernandes, the Brazilian Vice-Consul of San Francisco; G. Armas do Amarol, Portuguese Consul-General of San Francisco; Dr. R. S. Leite, professor of History, University of California; F. Sylva, San Francisco attorney and President of the Cabrillo Civic Clubs; and other local Portuguese. A resolution was passed at this gathering to make every effort to have San Miguel Island re-named Cabrillo Island.

San Miguel Island has had many names in the past: in 1542, upon discovery by Cabrillo, "Isla de San Lucas"; then "Isla de la Posesion," "Isla de Juan Rodríguez," "Isla de San Berbarido," and, finally "San Miguel Island."

On the morning of January 3rd, 1937, after two years of planning and three months of my trys at landing at Cuyler's Harbor, we set forth on the Coast Guard cutter *Hermes*, in command of Lt.-Comm. C. W. Thomas. We left Santa Barbara harbor at 9:00 a.m. and, after a very smooth crossing, we anchored at Cuyler's Harbor at 12:30 p.m.

The party was a large one and we were landed in the cutters longboats without shipping one drop of water. The Coast Guard boys did a marvelous job of bringing three boat loads of us ashore.

Herbert Lester, Mrs. Lester, and their two daughters were on the beach, along with the horse and sled, to greet us and welcome us to their island Kingdom. Mr. Lester was resplendent in his own designed uniform as master of the island.

The pilgrimage was made up of many notables. I will attempt to name only those I am able to remember. They were John R. White, (Superintendent of Sequoia National Park and the Cabrillo Monument on Point Loma) Grand President Manuel Sylvia, Father Hobrecht and Father Noonan of The Santa Barbara Mission, Brazilian Vice-Consul Dr. Carlos Fernandes, Dr. Louis Moderno, representing the local Portuguese people, City Councilman C. M. Graham, Geo. McCulloch, representing the Native Sons of



the Golden West, Mrs. Bonilla and our son Kenneth, representatives of the Morning Press, United Press and The Los Angeles Times, also G. Armas do Amoral Portuguese Consul-General. The ladies of the group who did not want to try the crossing were entertained during the day by the Reina Del Mar Parlor, Native Daughters of the Golden West.

Mr. Lester had a spot prepared on a knoll overlooking the harbor and had erected a large mound of boulders all ready to receive the cross.

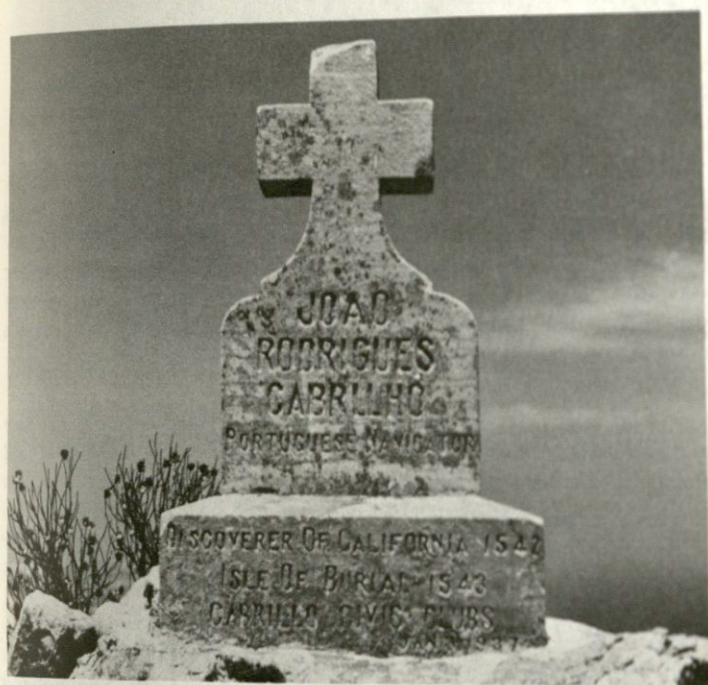
Father Noonan blessed the location and Dr. Leite gave a wonderful talk on the famous explorer, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo. Dr. Leite also told of other famous explorers who were of Portuguese nationality. Mr. Lester ran up the American Flag on a staff he had erected. The flag of Portugal was lifted to unveil the monument, finally at rest atop the mound of rocks.

The Monument read "*Joao Rodrigues Cabrilho Portuguese Navigator Discoverer of California 1542 Isle of Burial 1543 Cabrillo Civic Clubs Jan. 3, 1937*". Note the spelling. As being native, as we know it, it is the anglosized version. The monument is about 40 inches high and the mound of rocks about 48 inches high. From the moment one enters the harbor at Cuyler's, the cross can be seen as it sets high against the skyline. The knoll where the cross is located is east of the fresh water stream that runs down to the anchorage. I feel that, if there was any good holding ground for an anchor to grasp, this would be it. After having laid out a storm for four days there, I feel that, if Cabrillo is buried on this Island, we placed the cross as near to his grave as any one could do.

Mrs. Lester had prepared a feast for all of us and, after a wonderful meal, we were conducted through the large rambling old house and shown Mr. Lester's large collection of mementos. There were parts of many old shipwrecks, island artifacts of Indian origin and many items that had drifted in from the Orient. We also visited the smallest school in the United States, two seats and the teacher's chair. (Mrs. Lester was a certified teacher to her two daughters.) We embarked, finally, for Santa Barbara, reluctant to leave such fine hosts.



## *The Cabrillo Monument on San Miguel Island*



*A monument honoring explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo was placed above Cuyler Harbor in 1973.*

*(Photograph by Steve Junak)*

We were tired but happy and I say we, as there were many who helped us to accomplish our task.

The following year Capt. Geo. Dewey, of our local Port, spent some time with Mr. Lester on the island painting the rocks of the mound white and setting them in concrete. To my knowledge, it still stands buffeted by wind and sand keeping its lonely vigil over what many believe to be Juan Cabrillo's last resting place. Perhaps not exactly over Cabrillo's grave, as the spot where the cross sets was selected by Mr. Lester, but I feel that, had I been in command, this would have been the spot I would have buried my leader.

As we bade farewell to Mr. Lester, Deputy Sheriff of Rancho Rambouillet, San Miguel Island, we all vowed that we would do our utmost to have San Miguel Island's name changed to Cabrillo Island and attempt to have this done on the 400th anniversary of Cabrillo's burial.



## Santa Cruz Island Foundation

### Footnotes

1. Francisco Leiva Bonilla; a Portuguese explorer, sometime between 1594 and 1596, had followed Coronado's trail in search of the seven cities of gold, up the trail from what is now El Paso to the plains beyond Santa Fe, New Mexico, which Onate called "The Journey of Death." This illustrious explorer was killed by his aide, Juan de Humana. I have in my possession many papers from the Colorado Historical Society which leave very little doubt in my mind that my ancestry is of this same Bonilla.

*Note: Experts do not agree that San Miguel Island was the burial place of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo. It is known that he wintered on the island in 1542 during which time he broke either an arm or a leg which later became infected. Cabrillo died as a result of his injury, and many say that he was buried on San Miguel Island. However, in 1902 archaeologist Phillip Mills Jones recovered a stone slab on neighboring Santa Rosa Island which bears the initials JR, a simple cross, and a headless stick figure. In 1972 anthropologist Robert Heizer hypothesized that this 13 1/2" long stone slab could have been the stone which marked Cabrillo's grave on Santa Rosa Island. Others believe Cabrillo, a sea captain, would have been buried at sea.*

-editor



## SHEEP RANCHING ON SAN MIGUEL ISLAND

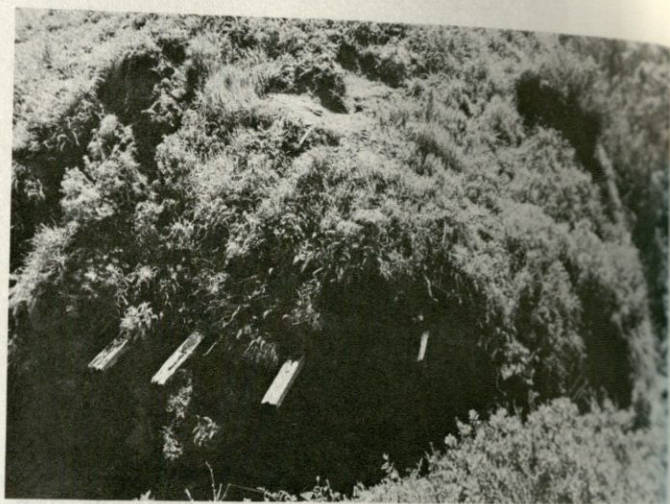
By Lois Roberts

*The following article was first published in the Southern California Quarterly, Volume LXIX, Number 2, Summer 1987.*

Heading west in Southern California, hunters and pioneers did not stop at the coastline. A few ventured on to the eight islands which form a western sea frontier. There for a hundred years and more they tended large flocks of sheep, a few cattle, and ran goats. Neglected by historians of our westward expansion, these ranchers were, however, visited by and mentioned in the writings of sport fishermen, naturalists, and archaeologists. Their fragmentary comments provided little understanding of how those who possessed the island managed their estate and dealt with mainland politics or how those who really lived there faced daily lives marked by isolation. This is an account of those who best knew the northernmost of the southern California islands, San Miguel. Located twenty-six miles off the California coast and just southeast of Point Conception, it is subject to a venturi effect which speeds up the movement of the wind and waters off Point Conception as they sweep into the Santa Barbara Channel. The churning waters and incessant winds create a climate and a landscape that has both fascinated and frustrated its residents. Only the daring were their visitors. Leaving aside San Miguel's long history of prehistoric inhabitants, exploration, shipwrecks, and pinnipeds hunted to near extinction the following pages move directly to the classic western topic of ranchers.



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*



*Exposed rafters of the Bruce or Nidever adobe.*

*(Photograph by W.E. Roberts)*

having stocked San Miguel and of his going there for the winter work, but neither Nidever's interview nor any other source recorded what life on the island ranch was like. His sons, George E. and Mark, were small boys when their father bought the island. During the 1860s they lived there and took care of the sheep. However, they tired of life on the island and asked their father to sell. The Nidevers, and perhaps Samuel Bruce before them, are believed to have lived in a small adobe house above Cuyler Harbor. Because the adobe was built into the earth and its ruins covered over with sand and soil, the wall stubs, a few exposed rafters, and the underground foundation constitute the best preserved historical site for the ranching era on the entire island.<sup>4</sup>

Adventuresome George Nidever is worth following through his life even though the sources we have tell so little about sheep ranching. The things he did highlight the history of the place and of the era. He had married Sinfiora Sanchez in 1841, a woman whose family owned by Mexican grant the 14,000-acre Rancho Santa Clara Rio del Norte. Thus, Sinfiora grew up among the best of Santa Barbara's society and could share the graceful living that went with those connections with her new husband. Nidever bought a large

## *Sheep Ranching on San Miguel Island*



*Exposed rafters of the Bruce or Nidever adobe (and author).*

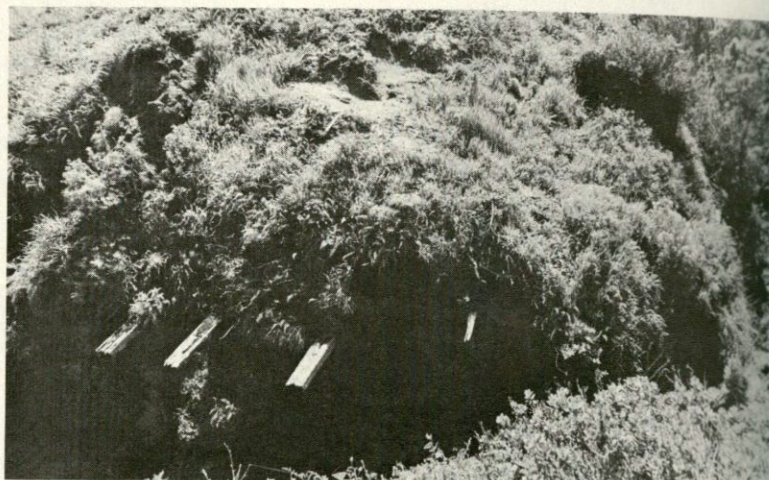
*(Photograph by W.E. Roberts)*

adobe house on the waterfront from another American, Joseph Chapman. It was situated on a low mound which was named after a subsequent American owner, Luis Burton. Observers described the house as the most conspicuous feature of the Santa Barbara waterfront for seventy years. It had a mill beside it, overlooked a saltery, and was known earlier as the Mission House because of its use by the mission. Petitions addressed to the Mexican officials on the Santa Barbara Town Council in 1849 commonly used the "Naidivar" place by the old saltery as a landmark to define the boundaries of their land claims.<sup>5</sup>

Just before Nidever bought his schooner and the rights to San Miguel he sold the Burton Mound adobe, but he promptly bought three city lots. Thus, with a good marriage, a growing family, and property, he could continue to enjoy the sea and the hunt. Sea gull eggs were in demand in San Francisco during the gold rush years, and in 1852 Nidever sailed his schooner out to San Nicolas Island to hunt for eggs. A short distance from the beach he and his companions discovered human footprints. As everyone up and down the coast knew, a woman had been left behind on San Nicolas when the schooner, the *Peor es Nada*, at the request of the



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*



*Exposed rafters of the Bruce or Nidever adobe.*

*(Photograph by W.E. Roberts)*

having stocked San Miguel and of his going there for the winter work, but neither Nidever's interview nor any other source recorded what life on the island ranch was like. His sons, George E. and Mark, were small boys when their father bought the island. During the 1860s they lived there and took care of the sheep. However, they tired of life on the island and asked their father to sell. The Nidevers, and perhaps Samuel Bruce before them, are believed to have lived in a small adobe house above Cuyler Harbor. Because the adobe was built into the earth and its ruins covered over with sand and soil, the wall stubs, a few exposed rafters, and the underground foundation constitute the best preserved historical site for the ranching era on the entire island.<sup>4</sup>

Adventuresome George Nidever is worth following through his life even though the sources we have tell so little about sheep ranching. The things he did highlight the history of the place and of the era. He had married Sinforosa Sanchez in 1841, a woman whose family owned by Mexican grant the 14,000-acre Rancho Santa Clara Rio del Norte. Thus, Sinforosa grew up among the best of Santa Barbara's society and could share the graceful living that went with those connections with her new husband. Nidever bought a large



## Sheep Ranching on San Miguel Island



Exposed rafters of the Bruce or Nidever adobe (and author).

(Photograph by W.E. Roberts)

adobe house on the waterfront from another American, Joseph Chapman. It was situated on a low mound which was named after a subsequent American owner, Luis Burton. Observers described the house as the most conspicuous feature of the Santa Barbara waterfront for seventy years. It had a mill beside it, overlooked a saltery, and was known earlier as the Mission House because of its use by the mission. Petitions addressed to the Mexican officials on the Santa Barbara Town Council in 1849 commonly used the "Naidivar" place by the old saltery as a landmark to define the boundaries of their land claims.<sup>5</sup>

Just before Nidever bought his schooner and the rights to San Miguel he sold the Burton Mound adobe, but he promptly bought three city lots. Thus, with a good marriage, a growing family, and property, he could continue to enjoy the sea and the hunt. Sea gull eggs were in demand in San Francisco during the gold rush years, and in 1852 Nidever sailed his schooner out to San Nicolas Island to hunt for eggs. A short distance from the beach he and his companions discovered human footprints. As everyone up and down the coast knew, a woman had been left behind on San Nicolas when the schooner, the *Peor es Nada*, at the request of the



### *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

mission fathers had removed all of the Indian men and their families from the island in 1836. Since the twenty-ton *Peor es Nada* was a chartered vessel and had to be returned to San Francisco, for many years no local boats ventured out to look for the abandoned woman. Nidever explained that among the coastal craft there was no boat large enough to go the long distance, about eighty miles, and withstand the rough sea of the outer rim of the channel.<sup>6</sup> While Nidever's part searched for the woman a sudden gale sprang up, so the men hastened back to Nidever's schooner and sailed off. The following winter, 1853, while hunting the otter around San Nicolas Island Nidever saw definite signs of human life, returned the following July, and he and his friend Dittmann found an Indian woman who had lived alone there since 1836. She willingly returned with them to Santa Barbara where half the town came out to see her and to visit her at Nidever's home. She delighted everyone with her good humor, singing and dancing; but in five weeks she was ill and died the seventh week. The adventurous Nidever had already left on another sailing trip, but he recalled that he had built her a rough casket before leaving.

Nidever's sons, George and Mark, may have moved off the island as early as May of 1869 when the family began to transfer San Miguel to the new owner, Hiram W. Mills. Judging from the records, Nidever used the ten or fifteen thousand dollars he got from the island sale of title, stock, and improvements to buy acreage in the Santa Barbara area: in Montecito, in Casitas Pass, in Sycamore Canyon, and in Carpenteria. In 1876 his interviewer would have found him at the Carpenteria place where he farmed and kept the fields free of squirrels by shooting them with his Colt revolver. He was still strong and active.<sup>7</sup> Nidever has a place in San Miguel's history because he developed a profitable sheep ranch there, but in a larger sense he was a symbolic figure who embodied the qualities of skill, ingenuity, and courage that made him the archetype of those first Americans who broke through the west all the way to California during the Mexican era. He died in 1878 at the age of 81.

The Nidevers probably looked upon San Miguel as did

### *Sheep Ranching on San Miguel Island*

some of the twentieth-century ranchers who used it as not really good for anything but grazing. Damaged flora was not at issue, but critical island visitors reported upon both the vegetation and the condition of the sheep as early as 1839. Thomas J. Farnham sailing along its coast in 1839-1840 called it barren and dry, marked here and there by a fire, and yet with fruitful spots and streams of water. Stehman Forney, working on a U.S. Coast Survey team in April 1871 and thus after the drought and the heaviest grazing, wrote that San Miguel was entirely destitute of wood and without a single tree or underbrush of any kind. The island was covered with coarse grasses which he thought could sustain 4,000 sheep. An archaeologist, Paul Schumaker, who visited the island in the early summer of 1875 described the vegetation as ruined by overstocking the island with sheep and the sheep which he saw being sheared were in a starving condition. He called the island a barren lump of sand with brown hills and with the sands rolling down the inclines to the sea as if liquid. The ground cover and its roots had been torn out by the hungry animals.<sup>8</sup>

Hiram Mills may have been primarily a figure in the paper work for San Miguel, as he immediately deeded three-fourths of the island to his brother Warren and two San Francisco businessmen, P.F. Mohrhart and J.M. Leuzander. A year and a half later he put the other fourth into their hands. In the fall of 1872 all of the owners transferred their title and interests in the island to the Pacific Wool Growing Company based in San Francisco. The Mills brothers ran sheep on Anacapa Island, and they turned over interests there to the new corporation as well. Hiram and Warren Mills both bought property in Santa Barbara, then Warren Mills proceeded to buy heavily into acreage in the Lompoc Valley and to purchase land in Ventura and in Montecito. Warren Mills lived on the island sporadically, and the family built a small two-story house near the Cuyler Harbor arroyo and east of the old adobe where it would be close to the largest spring on the island.

The wool market collapsed in 1876. This may have contributed to the squalid ranch conditions observed in the



*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

mission fathers had removed all of the Indian men and their families from the island in 1836. Since the twenty-ton *Peor es Nada* was a chartered vessel and had to be returned to San Francisco, for many years no local boats ventured out to look for the abandoned woman. Nidever explained that among the coastal craft there was no boat large enough to go the long distance, about eighty miles, and withstand the rough sea of the outer rim of the channel.<sup>6</sup> While Nidever's part searched for the woman a sudden gale sprang up, so the men hastened back to Nidever's schooner and sailed off. The following winter, 1853, while hunting the otter around San Nicolas Island Nidever saw definite signs of human life, returned the following July, and he and his friend Dittmann found an Indian woman who had lived alone there since 1836. She willingly returned with them to Santa Barbara where half the town came out to see her and to visit her at Nidever's home. She delighted everyone with her good humor, singing and dancing; but in five weeks she was ill and died the seventh week. The adventurous Nidever had already left on another sailing trip, but he recalled that he had built her a rough casket before leaving.

Nidever's sons, George and Mark, may have moved off the island as early as May of 1869 when the family began to transfer San Miguel to the new owner, Hiram W. Mills. Judging from the records, Nidever used the ten or fifteen thousand dollars he got from the island sale of title, stock, and improvements to buy acreage in the Santa Barbara area: in Montecito, in Casitas Pass, in Sycamore Canyon, and in Carpenteria. In 1876 his interviewer would have found him at the Carpenteria place where he farmed and kept the fields free of squirrels by shooting them with his Colt revolver. He was still strong and active.<sup>7</sup> Nidever has a place in San Miguel's history because he developed a profitable sheep ranch there, but in a larger sense he was a symbolic figure who embodied the qualities of skill, ingenuity, and courage that made him the archetype of those first Americans who broke through the west all the way to California during the Mexican era. He died in 1878 at the age of 81.

The Nidevers probably looked upon San Miguel as did

*Sheep Ranching on San Miguel Island*

some of the twentieth-century ranchers who used it as not really good for anything but grazing. Damaged flora was not at issue, but critical island visitors reported upon both the vegetation and the condition of the sheep as early as 1839. Thomas J. Farnham sailing along its coast in 1839-1840 called it barren and dry, marked here and there by a fire, and yet with fruitful spots and streams of water. Stehman Forney, working on a U.S. Coast Survey team in April 1871 and thus after the drought and the heaviest grazing, wrote that San Miguel was entirely destitute of wood and without a single tree or underbrush of any kind. The island was covered with coarse grasses which he thought could sustain 4,000 sheep. An archaeologist, Paul Schumaker, who visited the island in the early summer of 1875 described the vegetation as ruined by overstocking the island with sheep and the sheep which he saw being sheared were in a starving condition. He called the island a barren lump of sand with brown hills and with the sands rolling down the inclines to the sea as if liquid. The ground cover and its roots had been torn out by the hungry animals.<sup>8</sup>

Hiram Mills may have been primarily a figure in the paper work for San Miguel, as he immediately deeded three-fourths of the island to his brother Warren and two San Francisco businessmen, P.F. Mohrhart and J.M. Leuzarder. A year and a half later he put the other fourth into their hands. In the fall of 1872 all of the owners transferred their title and interests in the island to the Pacific Wool Growing Company based in San Francisco. The Mills brothers ran sheep on Anacapa Island, and they turned over interests there to the new corporation as well. Hiram and Warren Mills both bought property in Santa Barbara, then Warren Mills proceeded to buy heavily into acreage in the Lompoc Valley and to purchase land in Ventura and in Montecito. Warren Mills lived on the island sporadically, and the family built a small two-story house near the Cuyler Harbor arroyo and east of the old adobe where it would be close to the largest spring on the island.

The wool market collapsed in 1876. This may have contributed to the squalid ranch conditions observed in the



### Santa Cruz Island Foundation

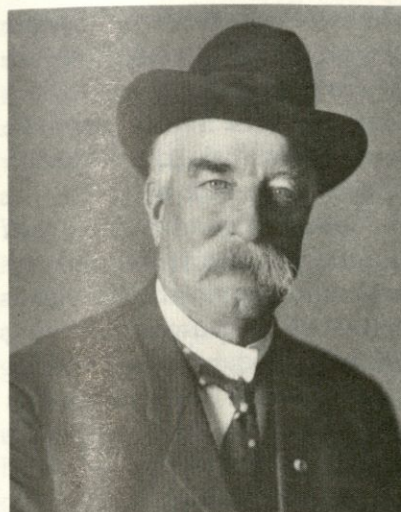


*Perpetual wind and wave action at Simonton Cove on the island's westerly end.*  
(Photograph by W.E. Roberts)

summer of 1877 by the archaeologist Rev. Stephen Bowers. He traveled out to San Miguel aboard a steamer with Hiram W. Mills recording that as they neared the island, breakers caused the ship to pitch at a fearful rate. Anchoring a mile offshore for safety, they boarded life boats with all their supplies, landed, and climbed the 250-foot bluff. Mills led them to a ranch house covered with sand almost to the top of the chimney. They shoveled their way into the house, cleaned up after the foxes that had been living in it, and used it for two weeks. Mills informed them that two miles of fence, an orchard of fruit trees, and another house were entirely covered and lost to view by drifting sands.<sup>9</sup>

Warren Mills was known to have managers to care for the ranch, however, the Bowers' account demonstrates that the ranch was at times abandoned. Overgrazing and neglect marked the almost two decades of the Pacific Wool Growing Company tenure. Warren Mills finally sold San Miguel Island because, as he told the subsequent owners, he had more land than he could attend to and was tired of the island. He added that he would never come out there again. With

### Sheep Ranching on San Miguel Island



*William G. Waters, the island's longest resident.*

(Santa Barbara Historical Society collection)

that he turned his attention to accumulating more and more Lompoc Valley property.<sup>10</sup>

William G. Waters bought half of San Miguel Ranch while in San Francisco in November 1887, and W. I. Nichols of Siskiyou County bought the other half in February 1888. Apparently neither had been out to the island, yet they immediately bought homes in Santa Barbara. Nichols lived in his, while Waters moved into the Mills house and took charge of the island on New Year's Day, 1888.<sup>11</sup>

San Miguel Island was a fully developed farm as well as a sheep ranch in 1888. How long it had been so is not known. The earlier deeds of sale transferred rights to tenements, appurtenances, and personal property, but a document of 1889 is the first to list hay farming implements, a wagon, blacksmith tools, furniture, and the small boats. The big meadow above the house had been planted in acres of hay and barley, and was fenced off from the south side of the island where about 4,000 sheep had been turned out.<sup>12</sup>

William Waters brought with him his wife, her fourteen-year-old adopted daughter Edith, and Ida, a woman to perform all household tasks. A young man, Jimmie, was there to meet them. He had worked on the island several months, and he would milk the cows, tend to the turkeys and



*Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

chickens and help with the farm work, as well as another hired hand, Adolph. The Mills house they lived in was a crude structure built partially from railroad ties with a bunkhouse and shearing shed nearby. Mrs. Waters, age 38, suffered from an advanced case of tuberculosis, but hoped to regain her health out on the island. She kept a diary for the five months they spent there, an intimate day-to-day account of their lives that left a clear outline of the work and the routine of life for the seven people who populated the island. She commenced with a statement about the purchase, stating that they paid \$10,000 for their undivided half, her money since Will had nothing. His kindness to her, his enthusiasm toward improving the ranch, and her love for him seemed to establish a great harmony that all of their island family shared.<sup>13</sup>

In the late nineteenth-century visits by sport fishermen and recreation sailors from the mainland were indeed rare. Only two vessels anchored in Cuyler Harbor in the five months aside from schooners that came out infrequently on necessary ranch business. The two were the steamer *Madronio* carrying Lighthouse Inspector Ludlow and a Chinese junk. The inspector walked about the island and left. The Chinese came ashore briefly looking for abalone and fished offshore. Overall, there was little social exchange for the Waters, only hard work and each other.

The day after their arrival in January, the two men and Jimmie began to cultivate with a harrow and to sow grain. They did this daily, if it did not rain, until mid February planting over fifty sacks of grain and sowing an additional twenty acres of barley. At the end of May when the hay was cut it made a stack over thirty feet high. Waters grew his own potatoes, built a grape arbor, and kept thirty cows and various pigs, turkeys, and chickens. Ample food from these sources was supplemented with fish and abalone. Ida served fried pork and abalone for the everyday breakfast. Rain was plentiful during the winter of 1888 filling the rain barrels and bringing forth good crops.

Waters worked with his men to complete several new projects: a new barn floor to keep the grain out of reach of the

*Sheep Ranching on San Miguel Island*

multitudes of island mice, a tool house, new fences, and by far the most ambitious, a new road down to the beach and over to the boat house at the dock. Waters set about blasting out rocks for several weeks on this undertaking, but in the end it was too narrow. Perched along the side of a fifty-foot deep arroyo it was always plagued with slides and washouts. Mrs. Waters rode down the incline in a dog cart one day and wrote that she was scared almost to death for fear of tipping over as anyone would be who has looked over into that chasm. Rain and mud rarely kept the men from their work. They toiled in gales that swept sand over the island the whole long day.

Sundays and the evenings were different. After dinner each night some or all of them played the old card games, Euchre and Pedro. Mrs. Waters sang, they read aloud to each other, and toward the end of their stay they held séances around the dining table. According to the diary, the table told Edith that she had once been on earth as a French countess, Mrs. Waters had been a Russian peasant before her present reincarnation, and the hired man, Adolph, was appalled to be told that "he was formerly a Hebrew and the third judge in the Danhedrin [Sanhedrin] who tried Christ." He lost faith in the séances after that.

The Sunday outings must have been wonderful. A rocker was mounted on the two-horse sled, the only vehicle that could possibly take them through the deep sand that littered the island. Mrs. Waters rode on this with her husband, and the others rode horseback. Weather permitting the whole family and hired help went for long rides across the island, to the base of Green Mountain, or to one of the beaches where they gathered abalone, fished or on occasion shot at the wild life. Mrs. Waters reported that Will killed three seals for their skins and that Adolph shot a bald eagle with a seven and a half-foot wing span. They collected mustard greens and the most beautiful wild flowers they had ever seen, and on special occasions rowed a little boat out to Gull Island to picnic and fish. For Mrs. Waters it was an awful climb up on the rocks, but worth it to eat their lunch there, a simple one of boiled eggs, milk, and bread. Afterwards, it was home for a turkey dinner with abalone soup, cream cake or custard, but



## *Santa Cruz Island Foundation*

rarely any fresh vegetables or fruit. They ran out of flour periodically.<sup>14</sup>

Their isolated ranch was carefree in many ways, yet there were worries. The schooner with supplies and mail could be held up by the weather for ten days or two weeks, and at best it only came out every six weeks or two months. The rare sight of another schooner was warning that there could be poachers who would come on the island and take their sheep. The island fox ate the turkeys and their young. Mrs. Waters lived in fear of the roof blowing off. Her personal life was far from easy as she suffered chronic pain, had major hemorrhages, and was justifiably concerned with death. She recorded talks with old friends "on the other side of the river." On many days she stayed in bed until evening. Her diary is like a page out of nineteenth-century women's history, the classic invalid and dutiful wife: shy, frustrated, and busy with little tasks such as rearranging her closet, mending sheets, and making a scrap book out of clippings from *Harpers Magazine*. Now that all of the people she knew that winter are on "the other side of the river" it is remarkable to find that it is only through her efforts that we can find out anything about the intimacies of ranch life on San Miguel Island in the late nineteenth century.

Mr. Nichols, Water's partner, had visited the island when three sheep shearers were brought out on February 16, a week after Nichols bought his half from Warren Mills. Mills came with him. In accordance with an agreement he made with Waters then, Nichols sent out a manager to take over from Waters on May 29, 1888. Mr. Read, the manager, would bring a herder with dogs, supply all of the food, and receive a third of the stock increase each year. His wife and six children lived with him on San Miguel. The Waters were back in Santa Barbara by June 2. Waters shaved off his beard, cut his hair, and donned his mainland clothes, and after a few weeks they boarded the coast train at the railhead in San Luis Obispo. Mrs. Waters died in San Francisco on January 17, 1890.

The San Miguel Ranch was a proven and profitable business in 1890. The value of the house, barn, mowing machines, several vessels used at the dock, and of the stock



## Sheep Ranching on San Miguel Island

itself comprised part of its worth. The other part was, until then, the unchallenged possessory right to the island that the ranchers deeded to each other as a title. Mr. Nichols sold his interest in the island to William Schilling of Long Beach December 19, 1889, for \$10,000, but Waters became almost possessed with the idea of ruling the island and ranched there till he died. He never married again, but returned to San Miguel after his wife's death with her adopted daughter, Edith, and lived there for many years. Edith was a teenager, hated it, and claimed she was a prisoner on an island swept by perpetual gales. She finally fled to the mainland on a boat that had come out to gather guano.<sup>15</sup>

In December 1890 Waters signed a promissory note for \$7,000 made to his new partner, Schilling, giving as security all of his personal property on San Miguel which he enumerated at 3,000 sheep and 150 cattle more or less, hogs, poultry, goats, miscellaneous tools and buildings, and the sloop *Liberty*. In January 1892 Schilling transferred the note to Elias Beckman, a financier of Ventura, and by February 1 of that year after a flurry of paper work Waters felt he had cleared the note by a payment to Beckman. History is not retold in the county deed records, but grasping at the outlines we can see a lapse of legal activity for about four years.

Then William Waters again appears on the books when he granted Jeremiah Conroy a third interest in San Miguel. A few months later on February 4, 1897, Waters, giving San Miguel as his residence, and four Los Angeles men formed the San Miguel Island Company incorporated with a capital stock of \$50,000. Initially they each subscribed \$100 making the island and all on it their exclusive possession.<sup>16</sup> The island had never been a Mexican land grant and thus had never cleared title through the Land Claims Commission. Nor had it ever been subject to a cadastral survey or patented in the U.S. Land Office. Possessory right to the land had been passed around and duly recorded in the deed books since the time of Bruce, but Elias Beckman, who held Waters's note, was sophisticated enough to want a distinction made between personal property and land ownership. He had dealt extensively in southern California real estate and banking. So





after the island company was formed he designed to block transfer of the land to the company. He filed a case against the company's claim in 1902 and got it to court in 1908. The company was dissolved in 1909 with all possessory rights distributed among the stock holders. Predictably the General Land Office had been called in for guidance and it confirmed that no land claim had ever been filed for San Miguel Island.<sup>17</sup>

William Waters knew of the cloud over the title and had extended the cloud to include the question of sovereignty as early as 1895. The newspapers published an item that year to the effect that England could take San Miguel Island for a coaling station since it had not been mentioned in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which settled the Mexican War in 1848. Perhaps because of the English menace, President Grover Cleveland sent out surveyors under the United States Marshal Nicholas Covarrubias in July 1896. Waters met the marshal on the beach, protested his entry, but did not resist the order.<sup>18</sup> Previous to this call he had sent U.S. survey parties on their way. Waters retold the story of the confrontation with the marshal to Mrs. Trask, an island visitor in 1906. He called himself the King of San Miguel and informed her that "he had purchased the island from a Mexican to whom the island had come as a Spanish grant; and that it never had been formally taken possession of by the United States."<sup>19</sup> He related to her how often he had turned his cannon on an officer who came without necessary official papers but explained that when Grover Cleveland had sent a civil request as the head of one nation made to another, the King of San Miguel Island very gallantly turned the freedom of the island over to his men.

In 1909 the President reserved all of San Miguel for lighthouse purposes under the Department of Commerce. Waters protested to President Taft in 1911 asking that he revoke the order and instead allow him to stay on the island. He argued that he had lived on the island ever since 1887, made many improvements, and had been a volunteer weather observer. Since he was an old soldier and had served at the front in the Civil War, it would be an undue hardship at his

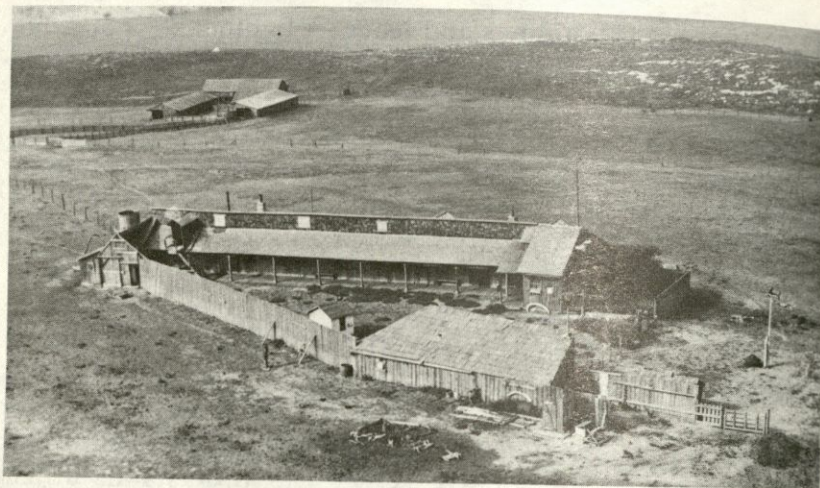
age to remove his buildings and leave. A lighthouse, if any, he wrote Taft, should be constructed on Richardson's Rock seven miles west of San Miguel. He then referred to his bout with the survey team which had tried to land during the Cleveland administration and argued anew that no mention was made of the island in the treaty between Spain and Mexico.<sup>20</sup>

The Department of Commerce found Water's claim without any foundation whatsoever. Still, it pointed out, the department was not under legal obligation to lease the island to the highest bidder or to solicit competitive bids, and a satisfactory disposition of the matter might be to issue Waters a revocable license to use the island for five years. On the other hand, the department could dispossess Waters and lease the island to another party. Over the protests of other would-be lessees, Waters agreed to the lease at \$5 a year. Lighthouse personnel came to inspect the water supply and to judge whether its rate of flow could furnish power for a future lighthouse. Waters took them around the island, graciously showing them springs, although the herders could not catch donkeys for them to use as transportation.

William Waters had good reason to defend his improvements in 1911. With the help of his resident manager, John Russell, he had completed a large and sturdy new ranch house on the meadow high above Cuyler Harbor. In 1908 newspaper reports had begun to appear about the eight-room ranch house he was building. Waters sailed into Santa Barbara to get materials and described its progress. He used the first person as if to make it known that he indeed designed it and was building it. Waters was in his mid-60s, able, and displayed the tremendous enthusiasm he had always had for ranch projects. In 1911 when he spelled out his improvements for the Lighthouse District Office he wrote, "I have built" when describing the house. His personal involvement is underlined here because after Waters' death there was some talk of it being John Russell's project, but that would not be credible.

What was left of the Mills house lay covered with sand to the northwest in the somewhat wind protected but unstable arroyo. The new house was a long narrow one with its





Ranch house built by William Waters and his manager, John Russell, as it looked in the 1930s. (Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History collection).

120-foot side facing on an angle to the northwest so it could fend off the continual winds coming around Point Conception. Double walled and with port holes for windows, it withstood gales that reached velocities of up to 100 miles an hour. Doors from each room opened out onto a protected walk way on the south side. In Waters' letter to the 18th Lighthouse District in 1911 he described five sleeping rooms with water and set bowls in each, two dining rooms (one for shearers), a large kitchen, wash room, milk room, and meat room. In another "L" shaped wing 90-feet long he had a storeroom, carpenter shop, blacksmith shop, harness room, cow barn, and room for wagons and tools. Northwest of the house complex proper he had a wool house for shearing and a 90-foot-long sheep shed. The warehouse on the beach was serviced by the road along the arroyo Waters had built in 1888. He wrote of a good well 16 feet deep and a windmill with a pump to force the water up to the house which was 125 feet away on higher land.<sup>21</sup>

Much of the wood came from shipwrecks and from cargoes of lumber schooners that had come to grief on the west end of the island. For example, the *J.M. Coleman* had gone aground in 1905 just inside Point Bennett. The men

hailed the redwood lumber it carried up from the ship to the ranch house site with Mexican burrows. Flour in twill bags also washed ashore. John Russell later recalled that they piled the bags of flour on top of the lumber before hauling it up the hill. The wet sacks sealed the flour tight, and the Russells used the flour for years. As lumber drifted ashore from ships like the *Comet* and the *J.F. West*, the house was rebuilt, fences and outbuildings repaired. Robert Brooks, who followed Waters as leaseholder, built a strong fence attached to the house at the west end and running east to shelter the structure against drifting sands and the southwest winds. The structure took on an "A" shape.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout Waters' long tenure he gained the reputation of a man who could nearly always be found on the island. He was regarded as a man who had lived there for so many years that he was somewhat peculiar. This was mainly because he claimed to own the island as a kingdom. When he hired John Russell is not known; however, this manager allowed Waters some freedom. By the time Waters built his house he was sailing to the mainland quite often and was known as "Captain" Waters. He lived well from his sheep business. In 1909 he reportedly ran about 5,000 sheep and belonged to the Jonathan Clubs of San Francisco and Los Angeles. He renewed his lease in 1916 but entered into a contract with two young partners, Robert L. Brooks and J.R. Moore in January 1917. They paid him \$30,000 for the improvements and 1,700 Spanish Merino sheep. Ordinary mainland sheep could not live on San Miguel. Four months later Waters died of a stroke.<sup>23</sup> He had lived on San Miguel Island for almost thirty years and had put more of his own physical labor into its development than would any other man.

Waters left behind an island so well known for overgrazing that a rancher in Montana asked permission to take off the sheep and to restock it for two years, but spend \$500 annually to plant grasses and hardy trees. The Department of Commerce turned him down. The National Association of Audubon Societies wanted the sheep removed and the island turned into a bird refuge. The lighthouse inspector answered that the idea would serve no good





Rancher Robert Brooks who leased San Miguel Island from 1917 to 1948 and ranch hand Arno.  
(Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History collection)

purpose, but to the contrary an injury would be suffered by the ranchers and by the community at large which derived certain benefits from the grazing industry. The Association, he advised, could have little Prince Island.<sup>24</sup>

Following the death of Waters and after some debate, the Lighthouse Bureau decided to lease San Miguel Island to Brooks and Moore for \$200 a year. In 1918 the ranch sheared 2,391 sheep. Both Brooks and Moore served in the Army during World War I and in their absence arranged for the Vail brothers who owned a ranch on the neighboring island of Santa Rosa to help out. John Russell continued to manage the ranch. Brooks was overseas for 21 months. Upon discharge the two lessees turned their attention to the island. Holding that maximum production and island regeneration could only be accomplished with a long-term lease, they had a bill drawn up to place before Congress which would assign the Brooks and Moore partnership a twenty-five year lease at \$400 a year. In return, they would invest \$10,000 in improvements outlined in the bill. They would take measures to control the 5,000-acre sand pit which ran across the island and replant grasses thus saving up to 2,000 acres. Brooks argued that the \$400 per annum rental translated into heads of sheep would be an annual cost of 20¢ per sheep, high pay for public grazing land on the mainland. Brooks's progressive policy was turned down by Superintendent Rhodes who was asked to endorse the bill. Rhodes claimed that annual grazing costs were a cent a day (\$3.65 per annum) per head on the mainland, the rental was too low.<sup>25</sup>

Robert Brooks was a mainland rancher and probably knew grazing costs as well as anyone. He was a handsome and colorful man who had first come to California as a result of an enforced year away from his studies at Yale University. During Easter vacation, 1911, he and some classmates had stolen a sailboat, gone down the river from New Haven, docked, had a good many beers, and decided they would never make it back in time for classes. One of the boys wired his professor a flippant message to the effect that he should not hold up the class for his return, and all of the vacationers were dismissed for a year. During this year, Brooks came out



to work on the ranch of an older brother, Philip, in the Imperial Valley. While he was there he somehow heard of San Miguel Island and the system of leases, so after he finished at Yale he made the deal with Waters. In 1918 Brooks returned from service in France, had an office in the Van Nuys Building in Los Angeles, and began to invest in rural real estate and crops such as sugar beets and lima beans. Brooks seemed like the kind of man whose optimism and general good sense could take him anywhere he wanted to go. He probably borrowed money to get started, but before long he married and lived on Camden Drive in Beverly Hills. He did not spend any significant amount of time indoors and instead worked around Oxnard and in Ventura County. He bought a ranch in Camarillo in 1931, went into other ventures with partners, and gradually developed two ranches on the mainland. In 1942 he brought his family to Hilltop Ranch in Carpinteria.<sup>26</sup>

Brooks thrived on work, hard outdoor work where he rubbed elbows with the ranch hands. At the end of the day he loved to drink and talk and spin tales with them, and he kept pictures of himself and these friends. San Miguel Island provided perhaps half of his annual income, but the island was far more important than income to Brooks. It supplied the romance he needed, a place to talk about, and a place to go with his workers at shearing time and work. Shearing time was a huge event, and the whole family got up in the middle of the night to see him off. His shearing hands consisted of several professional shearers and unskilled workers. He referred to the latter as "the bums of Santa Barbara." He cleared the county jail of inmates each year and claimed the city fathers loved him for it. Then he took his men out on Joe Castagnola's boat or Vail's *Rio Grande*, a tug, and dragged along a barge. Each year the old wharf had to be torn out and replaced because the waves damaged it badly. New chutes had to be built to bring the sheep down to the wharf where they were loaded onto the barge, 55 at a time, and taken to Port Hueneme, unloaded and transferred to his own ranch at Camarillo.

Sheep grazing on San Miguel went well. There were no predators on the island, lambing was considered a hundred



*Ranch Manager Herbert Lester and Pilot George Hammond, picture taken in the late 1930s.*

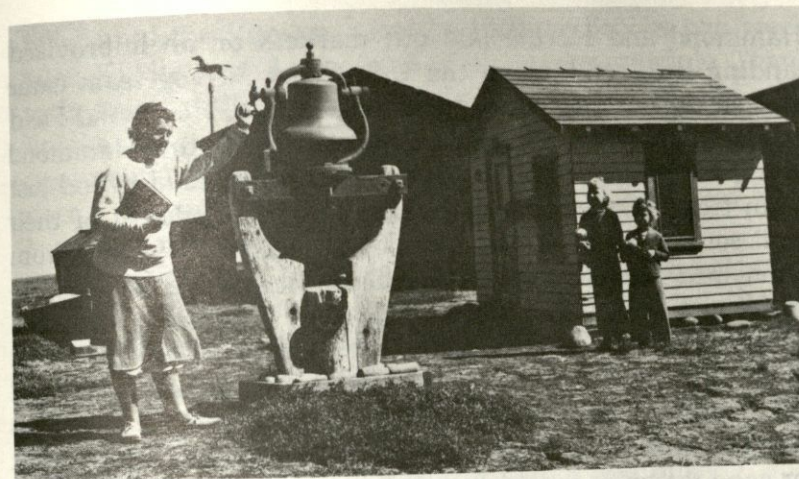
*(Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History collection)*



per cent. Tax records at Santa Barbara County indicate that none of the unsecured property on San Miguel was ever assessed or taxed. When, in 1923, San Miguel suffered a drought, Brooks took all the sheep to San Nicolas Island where he got permission from E. N. Vail to run them for a year.<sup>27</sup> Manager Russell left his job and moved to the mainland during the 1920s, and by 1929 Brooks was looking for long-term help. He called on a friend he had made in the army and convalesced with at Walter Reed Hospital, Herbert Steever Lester. Lester, an educated and traveled man, suffered from shell shock during the war. Although he was in most ways recovered, he wanted to flee from the incessant demands of civilization. He gave the job a try and found ranching on San Miguel completely satisfying.<sup>28</sup>

Herbert Lester made it his goal to acquire the island lease for himself and to pay Brooks for the \$20,000 worth of livestock and improvements that Brooks owned. He made an agreement with Brooks through which he would draw a small salary but accumulate capital at the same time. He also made concrete plans for \$10,000 in backing from a prosperous manufacturer in the east. The Great Depression put a damper on the arrangements, but Herbie never wanted to let go of the idea. The next year, 1930, he brought his bride, Elizabeth, to the island with her 500-book library and an enthusiasm to match his own. Together they set up an entirely new and unique lifestyle on San Miguel.

Herbie's endless charm and astonishingly likable personality together with Elizabeth's humor and intellect served as a magnet to draw famous and plain people out to an island that heretofore had only been famous for its shipwrecks and overgrazing. Sport fishing and recreational sailing were on the rise, and once the visitors went ashore, signed in at the guest book, took high tea with Elizabeth or visited Herbie's popular Killer Whale Bar, they returned to the mainland as avid publicity agents. Rancho Rambouillet, as the Lesters named the island, was photographed and published widely on the front pages of California newspapers and in magazines distributed nationwide. Unlike the Waters, the Lesters did not grow hay and barley or raise pigs and



Mrs. Lester, Marianne and Betsy at the schoolhouse on the island.  
(Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History collection)

poultry. When they became the managers there was only a sheep ranch, and they were dependent upon the supply boat for eggs, dairy products, and virtually all of their food. Herbie sheared sheep as did every able-bodied man who happened to be on the island at shearing time and he repaired all that needed repair using the blacksmith shop as had the managers before him. Yet, there was time aside from all of those tasks to embrace many visitors, to spend unforgettable hours with them, and to make San Miguel Island a sailor's haven. Mrs. Lester's charming book, *The Legendary King of San Miguel*, takes the reader through the highlights of those delightful twelve year when her husband wore makeshift insignias to distinguish him as Herbert I King of San Miguel and on to the tragic end of his reign.

George Fisk Hammond, an old friend of Robert Brooks, made more trips to San Miguel than any of the other visitors. He liked to fly and made his first landing on the island on July 22, 1934. Taking off from his family ranch, Bonnymede, along the beach in Santa Barbara, he was airborne at just about the point where the Biltmore Hotel stands today. The Lesters were delighted with his visit, and when he found that he could be of some service to them he flew out weekly.



Hammond and Herbie laid out markers on an improvised landing field, and when the U.S. Coast Survey team came over in 1934, it offered to put it on the map. Hammond Field appeared on aeronautical charts until 1965. At first Hammond brought the island family groceries, fresh vegetables, and just plain treats. Once he was aware of the irregularity of their mail service, he took this over in its entirety flying it from Bonnymede, where the U.S. Postal Service delivered it, to the island in a canvas bag properly labeled, "Hammond Airmail, Kingdom of San Miguel Island." Hammond flew his small single engine plane for an hour over water and into wind and fog to reach his rough landing field for at least eight years. His pleasure came from what every pilot seeks, challenging flight for good reason.<sup>29</sup>

The press made a great deal about an accident Robert Brooks had at the dock in June 1937. The Santa Barbara *News-Press* ran the headline, "Man's Life Saved by Island King," while the Los Angeles *Times* followed along with "Millionaire's Life Saved by Crude Surgery on Island." Brooks would have hated the latter headline, since he thought of millionaires as men in black suits who conducted their lives in plush surroundings. He identified with working men, was land poor, and made everyday contact with the hardest aspects of ranch life. He had, in fact, gone to the island for the annual shearing, and two weeks prior to the news story had been tearing out the landing from which the lambs were loaded for market preparatory to erecting a new one for the year's shipment. He stood on a slippery rock as he worked, lost his footing, and fell. As he fell, a rusted bolt extending from one of the piles caught his thigh and tore into his flesh. Herbert Lester decided the wound had to be sterilized and closed or Brooks could bleed to death. Lester had no medical training, but he had army experience and knew the thread he would use had to be strong. Using a curved needle and fishline cleansed in boiling water and lysol, he stitched the wound closed. There was no anaesthetic aside from alcohol to ease Brooks's pain, so he simply bore it. The Lesters had no radio, so they hoisted the flag upside down to attract a passing ship and waited. No ship saw the signal, thus they had no

relief until the *Vaquero* came to pick up Brooks two weeks later, luckily four days ahead of its regular schedule. Thanks to Lester's medical care, no infection developed, and when Brooks did visit a mainland doctor, there was little additional treatment needed. In fact, Brooks told his family that the doctor refused to take any pay as Lester had completed all the treatment necessary.<sup>30</sup>

As the Lester's two daughters approached school age, the family pondered the question of where to send them to school. To divide the family was difficult to accept, so it was decided that Mrs. Lester would teach them there on San Miguel. Their neighbors, the Vails, sent over a small playhouse which served as a school, and the Lesters completed it with small desks, a ship's bell outside, and a picture of George Washington on the wall. When the bell was rung Marianne, Betsy, and the family dog, Pomo, entered for a serious day's work. The school quickly became famous, and *Life Magazine* published an article on it in 1940 entitled "Swiss Family Lester." Students in Santa Barbara made finding out about the school and the island class projects and exchanged letters with the girls.

Thus the younger generation in Santa Barbara came to know about the recently famous island that had always been just thirty miles offshore.

Isolation with visitors was good to the Lesters, but they were living on government land with unique park-like features and with a strategic position offshore. Shortly after their arrival, November 7, 1934, Franklin Roosevelt transferred the jurisdiction and control of San Miguel Island and the Prince Island from the Secretary of Commerce to the Secretary of the Navy for naval purposes. The order reserved select sites for the Department of Commerce to be used for navigational aids. In 1935 Brooks signed a grazing lease with the Navy at \$600 a year. The Navy, under pressure by environmentalists, placed a limit of 1,200 on the number of sheep he could run and later changed it to a thousand. San Miguel became a new focus of interest when President Roosevelt proclaimed Santa Barbara Island and Anacapa Island a National Monument in 1938. San Miguel was



government land, and for its natural history alone it was destined to belong to the monument. The Park Service made a study of it in 1939, coming to the following conclusions:

. . . The present number of sheep (1100) would undoubtedly represent a conservative stocking under normal conditions, nature now is forcing man to pay the penalty for gross malpractice committed many years ago. For this reason 1100 sheep now are destructive of the remnant of the island's resources, although originally such a number might have been pastured there indefinitely with little or no harm.<sup>31</sup>

The Washington office of the Park Service took no action. World War II broke out, and the recommendations were not forwarded to the Navy until 1942. The Park Service had wanted all livestock and all cats removed and a replanting program commenced in 1939, but the timing coincided with a great international crisis so grazing continued for twenty-five more years.

The Lesters were unaware of the designs for acquisition that lay behind the Park Service's inquiry or any of the correspondence related to it. The attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 caused an overnight change in their lives. By Christmas they had two Navy men living with them on the island, and they had been cut off from the mainland except for an official supply boat. The Navy told them they could either leave or could stay at their own risk. Christmas passed without mail or presents for the girls. Herbie, suffering from an old war wound, anxious and depressed, went out to cut wood one day and chopped off two fingers. On June 18, 1942, he walked alone to a distant grassy spot and took his life with a gun that one of his captivated visitors had given him for his collection. The little family buried him on the island.<sup>32</sup>

Brooks hired an old Norwegian sailor and his wife, Ulmar and Rae Englund, to manage the ranch after Lester's death. When they left Al and Rosie Baglin took over, and they, thanks to wartime conditions, had an Army surplus jeep and were serviced by a twin-engine supply plane. Brooks came



*Chimney ruins of the ranch house taken after the fire.*

*(Photograph by W.E. Roberts)*

out as always to supervise and work with the shearing team bringing along college boys and members of his family to rebuild the dock and help with the roundup.<sup>33</sup>

The Navy revoked its lease in 1948 and told Brooks to take his sheep and other property off San Miguel. They gave him seventy-two hours. Guided missile and bomb targets would be placed in the waters at the island's edge, and drops that missed target could fall on the island itself. Brooks hauled in camping supplies by plane and a party of men covered the island by foot and on horseback looking for sheep in the rugged *barrancas*. Some furniture was moved out of the ranch house, but the time was too short. Brooks had to leave over 500 sheep and four horses behind. The good years had run out. Brooks was fifty-eight, and soon after leaving San Miguel he went out to dig up a broken pipe line at Hilltop Ranch in Carpinteria and suffered a heart attack. He survived it, but was never the same. In June 1950 he got permission from the Navy to return to San Miguel and remove his stock. Every other day they had enough sheep collected to ship them off by barge. But again, in the time allotted every sheep could not be rounded up.<sup>34</sup> Burros and sheep roamed the island throughout World War II. In 1961 Navy personnel were ordered to run



them down and shoot them whenever possible. A naturalist, E.R. Blakeley, obtained permission to land on the island that summer and could see the general deterioration of the ranch complex. The house leaked, but vandals had not really gotten into it as the books and china were in place. People lived in it now and then. The long protective wall Brooks had put up had fallen down, and the barn was only partially standing. In 1965 the roof of the house had caved in, the children's school had disappeared, and in 1967 the ranch house burned leaving only a fireplace Mr. Lester had built, a cistern, and Betsy's iron bedstead to mark its location.<sup>35</sup>

Sheep grazed on undisturbed into the 1960s. The verdure, trees, and brush alluded to in Juan Cabrillo's log of 1542 were gone, but following the sheep removals in 1948 and 1950 some recovery took place. A breeding nuclei of the sheep remained prompting the Park Service to advise the Navy to totally eliminate the sheep. In July 1966 the Navy dedicated four days to hunting down and doing away with the animals. Through aerial search at near ground level up and down canyons and by criss-crossing the island from one end to the other Navy men sighted 148 sheep. All were disposed of bringing to an end 127 years or more of continuous sheep grazing on San Miguel Island.<sup>36</sup>

Obviously, the essence of sheep ranching on San Miguel was not fence laws or marketing problems. William Waters and those who followed him apparently made good money from the enterprise, yet beyond this they also found great personal satisfaction. William Waters and Manager Herbert Lester proclaimed themselves kings and carried the role far beyond the joking stage. Robert Brooks found in it a sense of romance and masculinity he thrived on. Waters and his manager, John Russell, built a house so photographed and celebrated that its site has been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. So also has the Nidever adobe, the place where Nidever housed his boys while he hunted otter, lived in Santa Barbara, but apparently loved to call his own. For all of these men sheep ranching on San Miguel Island satisfied a sense of adventure, an identity, a challenge and a state of mind.

Notes

*Acknowledgment.* Research for this article began during the author's work on the "Historic Resource Study Channel Islands National Monument and San Miguel Island, California" prepared for the National Park Service under a contract with Chambers Consultants and Planners.

1. William Ellison, ed., *The Life and Adventures of George Nidever (1802-1883)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937), pp. 40, 76-77.

2. Miscellaneous, Book A, pp. 313-314, Santa Barbara County Records (hereafter SBCR).

3. Ellison, *Nidever*, p. 76; Robert Glass Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills* (San Marion, CA: The Huntington Library, 1975), p. 135.

4. Carl Dittmann, "Narrative of a Seafaring Life on the Coast of California," Dictated to E.F. Murray, Bancroft Library; Ellison, *Nidever*, p. 77; Field Study by writer, March 1978.

5. "Burton Mound" File, Santa Barbara Historical Society Archives (hereafter SBHSA); Book of the Resolutions of the Ayuntamiento of Santa Barbara, 1849, SBCR.

6. Deeds, Book B, pp. 38-39 and Book A, pp. 50-51, SBCR; Ellison, *Nidever*, p. 39 and see pp. 78-89 for material following.

7. Deeds, Book H, pp. 137-138 and 636. San Miguel Island probably sold for \$10,000 as this is the figure Nidever recalled in his interview; however, the two deed entries total \$15,000. See also Deeds, Book H, p. 633; Book C, p. 239; Book I, p. 53 and 139, SBCR; Ellison, *Nidever*, Foreword; Katherine Bell, "First Families of Santa Barbara," Burton Mound File, SBHSA.

8. Thomas J. Farnham, *Life, Adventures and Travels in California* (New York: Sheldon Blakeman and Co, 1857), p. 193; Letter, Forney to Supt. Benjamin Pierce, November 30, 1871, "Assistants 1866-1875, E-F," Record Group 23, National Archives (hereafter RG and NA); Paul Schumacher, "Some Remains of a Former People," *Overland Monthly*, XV (October 1875): 375.

9. Deeds, Book I, pp. 41-43; Book J, pp. 31, 277, 416-417, 642, and 802-803; Arlene Benson, "The Noontide Sun, Field Notes and Manuscripts of Rev. Stephen Bowers" (Master's Thesis, California State University Northridge, 1982). The following material has been drawn from Benson.

10. Deeds, Book I, pp. 145-146; Book J, pp. 299, 472, 488, and 555, SBCR; Waters Diary, 1888, Robert Brooks Collection, Oxnard; Schumacher, "Some Remains," p. 375.